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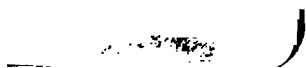
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# MEMOIRS OF RACHEL.

BY

MADAME DE B—.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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# MEMOIRS OF RACHEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

1848.

Three Months in the South of France—Rachel a Licensed Propagandist—Visit to Madame Lafarge—A Public Confession—A Hard-Hearted Father—Return to Paris—Sketch of the Organisation of the Théâtre Français—The Priestess Turns her Back on the Temple—A Visit of the Faculty—An Uncourteous Public.

RACHEL spent three months this year in the South of France, pursuing fortune indefatigably and playing without cessation almost. She performed eighty times in ninety days during the summer months, and in more than twenty different localities.

A singular circumstance, and one little known, connected with this tour is that, before leaving Paris, the *tragédienne* actually offered her services to the Provisional Government to popularise the Republic in the Departments by singing the

“Marseillaise” wherever she played! The offer was accepted by Ledru Rollin, the Minister of the Interior, who caused the following circular to be addressed to all theatrical managers in the Provinces, recommending Mademoiselle Rachel to their kind offices, and enjoining them to render her all aid in the exercise of her ministry as a propagandist:

“Cabinet of the Minister de l’Interieur,  
“Paris, April 24, 1848.

“CITIZEN MANAGER,

“Citizen Felix, having assembled a company with which he intends visiting various parts of France:

“It is his intention to have the masterpieces of our stage performed, the *citoyenne* Rachel volunteering to be their interpreter; the *citoyenne* Rachel has broken engagements to a large amount which she had abroad, in order to remain in France!

“The devotion she has shown to the Republic in Paris, by her admirable creation of the “Marseillaise” she intends displaying in the Departments.

“The electricity (!) she has diffused here will doubtless produce also the most marvellous and

salutary effects in our provinces. It is in the name of art, over which the Republic intends extending its powerful and fertilising protection, that I request you will take into consideration the sacrifices she makes, and lend your assistance to facilitate the performances which citizen Raphael Felix intends organizing in your town.

*“Salut et Fraternité*

*“ELIAS REGNAULT,*

*“Director, ad interim, of Theatres and Libraries.”*

M. Léon Legault, allured by the bright prospect held out in this circular, entered into an agreement with the Felixes, father, son, and daughter, by which it was stipulated they should receive, free of all expense, 4,400fr. from the general management of the Lyons theatres. This agreement was rescinded, and a second one made, by which the expenses occasioned by each performance were to be at the charge of the Felixes, they receiving the whole amount of the receipts made, with the sole condition of paying 1,000fr. per night to Mr. Legault.

The non-execution of this agreement entailed a forfeit of 5,000fr. unless its fulfilment was rendered impossible by war or some other public calamity.

The *tragédienne*, either deeming she could gain more elsewhere, or actuated by some other motive, altered her mind and her course, carrying the "*Marseillaise*" to Toulouse, Montpellier, Nîmes, Arles, Aix, Marseilles, &c., &c. This propagandist expedition was sufficiently remunerative to enable her to pay, without impoverishing herself, the 5,000fr. forfeit to which the tribunal condemned her at the suit of M. Legault for having neglected to popularise the Republic in Lyons according to the terms of her contract.

It was during this year's visit to Montpellier that Rachel obtained permission of the authorities, and of the captive herself, to visit Madame Lafarge, then imprisoned in the *Maison Centrale* of that town.

The unfortunate woman made a deep impression on her visitor. She could not but feel great interest in one who, innocent or guilty, had acquired so terrible a celebrity, and was suffering so cruel a doom.

One thing particularly impressed Mademoiselle Rachel : she plainly saw on the prisoner's features the seal of the fatal disease of which she herself and her sister were to die. Describing this interview in a letter to a friend, she alluded very

feelingly to the symptoms of consumption she had noticed in Madame Lafarge, saying :

“ The poor woman—whether guilty or not, I must call her so—the poor woman is slowly dying of that most terrible of all diseases—consumption—she feels the skein of life’s thread unwinding, and, to the very last, she will see, she will feel! It is very dreadful! Better far a bullet in the weak chest, or a tile falling on the aching head, some windy day.”

Did the writer then presage her own fate when she expressed such horror of another’s ?

Mademoiselle Rachel afterwards told her friends that she had consulted several clairvoyants, and that to her inquiry whether Madame Lafarge was guilty, the answer had always been in the negative. This was probably more satisfactory to her than such evidence would have been to judge or jury.

Her tour was marked by other incidents of a less gloomy nature. In this same town, H——, the actor who played the part of *Theramènes* was hissed in the famous narrative of the death of *Hippolyte*. He immediately advanced to the footlights, and, addressing the public with imperturbable *sang froid*, said :

“ *Ma foi*, gentlemen ; you are quite right ; I

said it shockingly; but never mind, I'll begin it all over again!"

*Phèdre*, who was waiting in the slips for the moment when she is to drink the poison (*que Médée apporta dans Athènes*), laughed heartily at this confession.

At Draguignan, Fleuret, who played the part of *Theseus*, worn out with his constant nightwork and day-travelling, fell fast asleep while listening to the above-mentioned narrative of his son's horrible death. A very vigorous reminder bestowed upon his shins was required to rouse him in time to exclaim:

"O mon fils, chère espoir que je me suis ravi."

But while Rachel was away reaping her rich summer harvests, the green-room intrigues and spirit of revolt, which the necessity of union had momentarily quelled, began to ferment anew, and on her return in September, she found her own empire undermined and her favorite, the Dictator, whom she had been so instrumental in creating, on the eve of being expelled. The dismissal of citizen Lockroy was imminent.

It is difficult for those unacquainted with French customs to have any idea of the importance attached by the public to all that concerns the stage, of the absorbing interest taken by the



Parisians in the quarrels of actors, in the vicissitudes of their theatres, in the green-room intrigues. The high honor in which dramatic literature is held contributes greatly towards exciting this interest. Actors in France are not left to their own resources as is the case in other countries. The French Government grants considerable subsidies to the larger theatres, in order to enable them to add *eclat* to their performances, to afford to their artists the leisure necessary to perfect their studies, to remunerate the talent employed. The influence of Government is not so materially felt by the minor theatres, though its protection and encouragement is also extended to them. Among the houses to which the subsidy is granted, the chief are the Grand Opera and the Théâtre Français. The Grand Opera, one of the greatest attractions the capital offers to foreigners, is, in part, a dependence of the Crown, and, since its creation by Louis XIV. all the succeeding Sovereigns have felt a pride in sustaining it with *eclat*. As to the Théâtre Français, or, La Comédie Française, as it is indifferently called, its actors are looked upon as the chosen and enlightened interpreters of that dramatic literature which is one of the glories of France. The actors reap the benefit of the worship tributed to the genius of Corneille,

Racine, Molière, Régnard, Voltaire and so many other master-minds. Hence the lively interest with which the public regards everything that concerns them. Their lawsuits are matters of public import, the most distinguished lawyers dispute the honor of figuring in them, and the public journals follow the cases as though the fate of the country was at stake.

That the reader may the better understand the nature and the object of the dissensions between Mademoiselle Rachel and the Théâtre Français, dissensions which the law was called upon to settle at the close of this year, a slight sketch of the peculiar organisation of that theatre is indispensable. Without this commentary this portion of our work would prove to some persons unintelligible.

The actors of the Théâtre Français constitute, in fact, a commercial association. The talent of each member is the portion of capital he brings into it, and, according to the valuation put on this intellectual property, each is entitled to what is called a half, a quarter, an eighth, three-quarters of a share, or a full share in the profits of the theatre, which are divided into twenty-four shares. When all the shares are taken the *personnel* of the theatre is not yet sufficiently nume-

rous for its requirements; to supply the deficiency the holders of shares, that is the *comédiens sociétaires* engage what are called *pensionnaires*. The *pensionnaires* are actors with fixed salaries paid by *sociétaires*. These salaries diminish the profits of the company and constitute one of its charges.

The company is governed by a committee of management, composed of six male members. The company has also the privilege of being the arbiter of literary merit; as it is to a *comité de lecture*, composed of male and female members, that all plays presented to the theatre are submitted, and this last committee has a right to refuse, to receive, fully or conditionally, at its own discretion, any play.

This constitutional charter, which had existed for many years, was confirmed by a decree known as the "Decree of Moscow," from its having been signed by Napoleon I. in that city on the 15th October, 1815. By virtue of this decree, the free action of this company is only subject to the *surveillance* of the superintendent of the Court performance and to that of the Imperial Commissioner; its committees regulate the material, financial and artistic affairs of the theatre with almost uncontrolled freedom. *Certes*, no organisation can be more liberal; none could seem

better calculated to stimulate the actors to do their utmost for the prosperity of their house, since whatsoever they do is for their own interests, and the value of their shares is increased according to the benefits realised; it places them moreover, in a position of honorable independence, and should have the effect of maintaining peace and concord among them, as they are themselves the arbiters of all the little discussions, the rivalries, bickerings and quarrels arising from wounded vanity and irritated self-love, inseparable to the profession. Unfortunately the facts have always been far from justifying this fair conclusion. At the time the decree of Moscow was published, bitter dissensions, envenomed rivalries, among others that which reigned between Mademoiselle Mars and Mademoiselle Levert, divided the company. The decree was the *quos ego!* of him who was accustomed to see all things return, at his command, within the limits of order.

After the fall of the Empire, the company went on, somewhat lamely to be sure, under the rather lax *surveillance* of Messieurs the Gentlemen of the Bed-chamber, who had been brought back by the Restoration, taking refuge, ever and anon, against any real or fancied infringement of its privileges, under the shadow of the decree of

Moscow as under the Palladium of its independence. But, like all other bodies, after 1830, it began to experience the effects of the dissolving spirit of the times. Matters came to such a pass that in 1847, the wretched management, the intestine strife, the bad state of its financial affairs, made the interposition of Government indispensable. By a decree published on the 29th of August, a chief was appointed to the disorganised Republic. The director chosen was M. Buloz, a man of letters of some reputation, who had given proof of his capacity for management in the successful organisation of the "*Revue des deux Mondes*," a monthly publication. The nomination of M. Buloz in the place of the committee of management was a complete revolution for the company; the new director, was, by some of the members, received as an usurper, by others as a liberator.

The continual complaints of Mademoiselle Rachel, which always found favor with those in authority, her threats of resignation, as far back as the year 1846, had largely contributed to bring about the measures that had finally caused the nomination of M. Buloz. From the beginning she had declared herself in favor of the dictatorship, and from that time she had been

the soul of the party that had sustained it ever since its first creation.

Mademoiselle Rachel had a whole share in the company and forty-two thousand francs out of the subvention granted by the State. Consequently it was for her interest that the theatre should be ably managed, and made to give large profits. It was no less for her interests that it should keep on good terms with every Government. She knew well, too, that an actress of more than ordinary talent, a young and pretty woman, would have a far better chance of ruling a manager, however absolute he might be, than a committee of six men all actuated by different views, claims, and passions.

These considerations led Mademoiselle Rachel to lend all her influence to the election of M. Lockroy, the Republican commissary who succeeded M. Buloz, expelled in February. But revolutions are moving sands; when the revolutionary fever had cooled off, and while Mademoiselle Rachel was away on leave, the independent party raised its head in the committee. M. Lockroy was attacked, his provisional origin, his national performances, his "Marseillaise," were made as great reproaches of as the ministerial origin of M. Buloz had formerly been. M. Lockroy

was in his turn assaulted by his very constituents, and when his firm ally, Mademoiselle Rachel returned, his fall was decreed, and it actually took place in the beginning of October. His dismissal angered Mademoiselle Rachel exceedingly; it wounded her vanity and injured her interests. She resolved on the most energetic measures rather than fall again under the democratic yoke of her peers, whom she refused to look upon as her equals. She had re-commenced her theatrical duties on her return from her summer tour, opening the season with "Phèdre," on the 5th of September. The "Marseillaise" was called for but not given. The episodes of June had taken place, a reaction, of which Jules Janin had shown himself one of the most energetic and courageous organs, had followed, and the change in public opinion was evident from the coldness with which the call was received by the majority of the audience. The stage-manager came forward and said Mademoiselle Rachel was troubled with a cold.

On the 12th of October Mademoiselle Rachel again attempted a part unsuited to her age and style. She played *Agrippine* in "Britannicus" and failed completely in it.

Mademoiselle Rachel had hoped by her alacrity

in resuming her duties to maintain M. Lockroy in power; finding her wishes disregarded and her ally dismissed, she resorted to her former threats of resigning, and finally did so. The resignation was duly notified to her "dear comrades," in a letter dated the 14th of October. She had now completed the term of service—ten years—specified by the decree of Moscow, to enable a *sociétaire* to resign. The last phrase of her letter contains the reasons she gives for her determination.

"It is with regret," says this thorough actress, "it is with the deepest grief, my dear comrades, that I find myself under the necessity of retiring *for ever* from the Théâtre Français, but my health, *perhaps my dignity*, are depending on that step."

The committee was, or appeared to be, surprised.

"What," exclaimed its members, on the receipt of this letter, "Mademoiselle Rachel ill! why she was never better in her life than she is this year, and never performed her duties so well. She has played once in March, thirteen times in April, thirteen times in May. If we count the number of times she has performed during her *congé*, we shall find she played twenty-seven times in one month! She may require rest after such



fatiguing labors; we are aware that she is in the habit of getting her physicians to prescribe periods of convalescence every time she returns from her periodical excursions; but this does not constitute an illness; it would, on the contrary, go to prove a most energetic nature."

The committee thereupon endeavored to induce Mademoiselle Rachel to retract so ill-grounded a resolution. Her answer was not delayed, and in it something of the true motives that actuated her peeps out.

"I am no longer able, *when thus annoyed and vexed*, to fulfil the duties of the art to which I have devoted my life."

Here she no longer complains of health; wounded self-love is the grievance.

All measures of conciliation appearing useless, the management had recourse to the law, and a suit was commenced on the 20th of November, before the civil tribunal of the Seine. A letter, however, from Mademoiselle Rachel to the committee (no longer her "dear comrades") stopped the proceedings for a time. It was couched in the following terms:

"MESSIEURS,

"The state of my health is such that the suit

you have commenced on the 20th of this month has in reality no object, and no immediate urgency.

\* \* \* \* I am not able to act. The physicians attached to the theatre are welcome to ascertain the truth of this statement, and I am willing to receive their visit."

Mademoiselle Rachel then proposes that the suit brought against her be allowed to rest for a while, and requests her comrades will remember that her devotion to the interests of the theatre has occasioned the ruin of her health. She then goes on to say :

"I have notified to you my resignation or my retirement. I am legally entitled to do so, and it is my firm intention to adhere to it. If it is required that I should reiterate my decision within one year from the date of the 14th of October, and if my doing so will put a stop to all difficulties, I am willing to do so."

The offer to submit to the decision of the faculty and the delay of one year thus proposed stopped the suit.

The 17th of December was appointed for the medical visit. It was at the residence of Mademoiselle Rachel, No. 10, rue de Rivoli, that this scene, worthy the pen of the immortal author of

“Le Malade Imaginaire,” took place. The doctors, her adversaries, deputed to report her in excellent health, found her on the defensive, guarded by her own physician, Doctor Denis, equally determined to make her out ill before and against all men. This champion, omitting none of the diagnostic and prognostical signs on which he could base his client’s malady and establish its nature asserted that she had been greatly indisposed for the last six weeks, that she suffered from fits of pain in her chest, fever, want of sleep, and progressive falling away. As the patient’s appearance did not corroborate this “progressive thinning,” she met this objection by the acknowledgment that she had been “improving lately.” The visitors finding no fever or other symptoms to warrant the assertion of illness, decided that a fortnight’s rest was all she required to enable her to resume her duties.

But there was another tribunal of far more importance, whose verdict the *tragédienne* had not thought of—another far more severe judge summoned her to give a reason for her inaction during four months. The public in its turn instituted an inquiry, and the result was not favorable to her. We are seldom disposed to indulgence towards those who deprive us of our pleasures. Her conduct

was severely censured, and set down as the capricious malice of an imperious woman. The Republican public, less patient and courteous than had been the monarchical one, manifested its opinions rather rudely. In the sort of *vaudeville* review of the year brought out on the stage at its close, some complimentary stanzas to Mademoiselle Rachel having been introduced, were loudly hissed.

Thus closed, for Mademoiselle Rachel, the year 1848, commenced amid such applause. She might comfort herself with the thought that the noisy token of disapprobation that closed her short-lived popular career, offered a resemblance to the Republican ovations of former times; the hiss that pursued the Roman generals amid their triumphs had been revived for her benefit.

## CHAPTER II.

1849.

A Spoiled Child—Proscription of “*Cinna*”—“*Le Moineau de Lesbie*”—The Real Adrienne Lecouvreur—Funeral Honors to Theatrical Talent in France and in England in 1730—The Adrienne Lecouvreur of Messrs. Scribe and Legouv  —A Characteristic Letter.

THE motives that kept Mademoiselle Rachel from the stage during the last three months of the year 1848 have been given. In accordance with the decision of the faculty she should have made her appearance on the 2nd of January 1849; but she contrived to suggest so many delays that the long-expected event did not take place until the 13th. The attitude of the public revealed a deeper displeasure than was usually manifested by its coldness on former occasions of re-appearance; it was decidedly hostile. It was a sullen brooding discontent that was evidently waiting to seize the first opportunity of breaking out in open murmurs. The actress could not mistake the

feeling that actuated her audience; but, as was always the case with her, the more difficult the situation the more energy and courage she displayed; the greater the anger of the public the more winning and fascinating she became. She invariably acted the part of the spoiled child that is sure to conquer in the end, whatever degree of severity may be shown to it at first. The wish to reinstate herself in the favor of the public produced an excitement of her nervous system that resembled depth of feeling and lent an indescribable charm to her acting. The tragedy was "Andromaque," and never had the actress played with such rare perfection. The result was a free pardon, manifested by immense applause. The Prince President honored the performance with his presence.

Among the signs of the times was the withdrawal of the play of "Cinna," that had been announced for Mademoiselle Rachel's *rentrée*. If she had chosen this tragedy as an expiation of past sins, this Parthian arrow shot at her Provisional friends of 1848 was in bad taste. The Government of the Prince President showed more tact and judgment; the tragedy of "Cinna," was prohibited and that of "Andromaque" substituted.

It would indeed have been imprudent to repeat before a *parterre*, still perhaps agitated by remains of the turbulent passions so lately vented, such a line as this :

“ Le pire des Etats est l’Etat populaire ! ”

Neither would it have been proper to offer to the anti-Republican party such allusions as these :

“ Un tas d’hommes perdus de dettes et de crimes

Que pressent de mes lois les ordres légitimes  
Et qui désespérant de les plus éviter,

Si tout n’est renversé ne sauraient subsister.”

This was not the first time lately that “ Cinna ” had been deemed too plain spoken. The following lines were, indeed, well calculated to set the volcanic heads of the pit in a blaze :

“ Les honneurs sont vendus au plus ambitieux,  
Ces petits souverains qu’il fait pour une  
année,

Voyant d’un temps si court leur puissance  
bornée,

Des plus heureux desseins font avorter le  
fruit

De peur de le laisser a celui qui les suit.”

The press, however, did not fail to comment upon the withdrawal of this tragedy, and to take note of and quote the political allusions that oc-


the benefit of Mademoiselle Anais on the boards of the Italian Opera-house. It was the last piece, and midnight had sounded when it was begun. Acted before an audience satiated with the preceding entertainments, worn out with fatigue and half asleep, it had very nearly proved a failure. Brought out on the following Saturday in its proper sphere, the Théâtre Français, it obtained a great success.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a great change was introduced in the manner of reciting on the French stage. The authors of this revolution were the celebrated Baron and the no less celebrated Adrienne Lecouvreur. The father of the latter was a hatter who, not finding his trade sufficiently lucrative in his own little provincial town, came up to Paris with his family, in the hope of bettering his circumstances. He settled near the Théâtre Français, then situated in the Faubourg St. Germain. This proximity afforded Adrienne opportunities for indulging his taste for theatricals, and developed the inclination she had manifested from early childhood. She soon proved that "where there is a will there is a way;" for in 1705, when hardly fifteen years of age, she persuaded some young companions to join her in getting up no less a tragedy than

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“Polyeucte,” followed by the comedy of “Le Deuil.” The rehearsals, which took place at a grocer’s shop in the rue Feron, having excited some curiosity in the neighborhood, were honored by the presence of several persons of distinction. Astonished at the extraordinary talent shown by the hatter’s daughter, who played *Pauline*, the visitors mentioned her with enthusiasm to Madame la Présidente Lejay, and that lady built a little theatre in the court-yard of her own hotel, rue Garancière, for the juvenile company. The select audience, though disposed to indulgence, found they had little need of any. The untutored girl delighted ears that were accustomed to the best actors of the day; her intonation—correct, pure, and true to nature—formed a striking contrast with that of the performers then in vogue, who declaimed, bawled or chaunted, but never *spoke* their parts. The players of the Comedie Française, getting wind of the favor shown to the band of youthful amateurs, and jealous of the privileges of their own house, represented the case to d’Argenson, the Lieutenant of Police, as an infringement of their rights. An *exempt* and his man were dispatched to bring the delinquents before the dreaded man in authority. Adrienne and her accomplices were terrified beyond



measure, but their protectress interposed between them and the lieutenant; a few words explained all, and the order was revoked on condition the performances should be discontinued. But the courage of the little people was not cowed; they managed to get the Grand Prieur interested in their behalf, and under the protection of the walls of the Temple, were enabled to set at nought the prohibition of the police. What the authority of d'Argenson had failed to accomplish, however, was effected by the spirit of discord. After two or three performances the self-constituted actors quarrelled as though they had been regularly-organised players in ordinary to his Majesty and the company was broken up.

Mademoiselle Lecouvreur did not, as is often the case with young artists, meet with any opposition to her vocation in her own family. Her father encouraged and cultivated her taste by his judicious advice, and the fame of her precocious talent soon procured her offers from provincial managers. She played for some years in Strassburg, and the chief towns of Alsace and Lorraine.

Her success in the provinces facilitated her admittance on the boards of the Théâtre Français, that had once well nigh put an end to her theatrical career, and she made her *débüt* there in the

month of May of the year 1717, in the character of *Electre*. The sensation she created was very great; she was accounted one of the first actresses of the age, and rivalled Mademoiselle Duclos, who, for twenty-four years, had been the favorite of the public.

As an *artiste*, Adrienne Lecouvreur left a name for talent of the highest order—she was no less admired for her charms of person. All grace in her manners, her carriage was so noble and dignified that it was said of her that she was a queen among the players. Simplicity and propriety, correctness and elegance, characterised her style. Her voice, though not of great compass, possessed an infinite variety of inflections and the most moving tones. Her features were fine and sufficiently marked to express strong passions, while her eyes, full of fire, added the most eloquent commentary to what was uttered by her lips. Her figure, though slight, and not above the middle height, was well developed and seemed much taller on the boards. The good taste and richness of her dress enhanced the gifts of Nature, not the least of which was a gentle loving heart, a ready wit, and, what is far more valuable, the great art of making that wit a source of pleasure instead of pain to her friends.

No actress better understood than Mademoiselle Lecouvreur the art of listening. Her pantomime was so expressive that everything the actor who was addressing her said was depicted on her countenance. Her quick comprehension taught her instantly the road to the heart; she gave power and meaning to weak and insignificant lines, and new beauties to fine ones. Consummate in the art of entering into the spirit of the part, she felt what she uttered, and communicated her sensations to her audience. No *tragédienne* ever drew more tears, or inspired such terror.

With so many titles to favor, it cannot be wondered that this charming woman was dear to all who knew her. With the public she was all in all—pit and boxes agreed in idolising her. Nor did she, like modern favorites, take advantage of this passionate fondness to show herself exacting, capricious, or imperious. She proved herself worthy of an affection that did honour to both sides, by the most scrupulous punctuality in the discharge of her professional duties. It is recorded of Adrienne Lecouvreur and of her no less famous contemporary the actor Baron that, always ready to perform when required, they never had recourse to the hackneyed pretence of indisposition to obtain an exemption from duty. They

left to the invention of their successor, the talented Lekain, the convenient fashion of going every year to reap golden harvests in the provinces or abroad while they were paid in the capital.

Among the numerous admirers of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur the one who obtained a lasting hold on her affections was the famous Count Marshal de Saxe, the son of Augustus, King of Poland, and of the beautiful Countess of Konigsmark, as handsome as his mother and as brave as the God of War. When this romantic knight was planning the conquest of his Duchy of Courland, notwithstanding his high reputation and illustrious birth, he could find no one to join him in raising funds for his adventurous scheme; his own purse was quite inadequate to supply the demands of his courage. His generous mistress realised by the sale of her diamonds the sum of 40,000 livres—equal then to three times that amount in the present day—and compelled him to accept it. Although the expedition was unsuccessful the hero of it was not the less the lion of the aristocratic circles of the capital, and the beauties of the Court employed all the magic of their seductions to draw him into their toils. No less a lady than the Duchess of Bouillon is said to have been at last successful in making him forget the allegiance he owed to the

fair Adrienne. Stung with jealousy, the actress seized the only means of revenge in her power. One night, when acting *Phèdre*, instead of addressing to her confidant the passage :

“ Je sais mes perfidies,

C'enone, et ne suis point de ces femmes hardies,

Qui goutant dans le crime une tranquille paix,

Ont su se faire un front qui ne rougit jamais,”

she turned to the conspicuous box where her rival sat in all the pomp of rank and apostrophised her with all the passionate scorn and indignation she knew so well how to throw into the lines. The public, who understood the real drama, applauded vehemently, and the enraged duchess vowed vengeance. The death of Adrienne Lecouvreur, though arising from natural causes, followed this little scene within so short a time that the tongue of malice might have attempted to show a strange coincidence between them. But the nature of the illness that cut short the career of this celebrated actress was too well known to justify such conjectures, and it was left to the unscrupulous pens of dramatists and novelists thus wantonly to charge the memory of the high-born and beautiful with so odious a crime.

On the 23rd of October, 1730, the English stage lost one of its brightest ornaments in the

person of Mrs. Oldfield. The body, after laying several days in the Jerusalem chamber at Westminster, was borne in great pomp to the Abbey, where it was interred among England's high-born and high-honored. The pall-bearers were Lords Delaware and Harvey, Messrs. Dorington, Hodges and Cary, and Captain Elliot. The funeral service was performed by Doctor Barker.

On the 17th of March of the same year Adrienne Lecouvreur, the beloved of the French public, died, and was, perhaps, still more regretted than her English contemporary. Her illness having been too short to permit of a reconciliation with the church, an intolerant curate refused to permit of her being interred in consecrated ground, although she had left 1,000fr. to the church of St. Sulpice. The body of the lovely and talented creature, immortalised by the pen of Voltaire, was carried in a hackney-coach, in the dead of the night, to the corner of the rue de Bourgogne, then a marsh, and there buried!

Such a hero and such a heroine, surrounded in their different spheres with so bright a halo of love, glory and fame, could not fail to tempt the pens of dramatic authors. But the only successful attempt has been that of Messrs. Scribe and Legouv  . The part of *Adrienne*, was offered to Mademoiselle

Rachel, but, afraid perhaps, of the transition from the daring crimes and undisguised passions of the Greek and Roman personages to the clandestine midnight intrigues of the modern drama, of the change from the grand Alexandrines of the classic poets to the prose of every-day life, she refused to undertake it, though she had accepted it at first. M. Scribe then gave the part to Mademoiselle Rose Cheri, and it was not until six months after that the play having been read anew at the Théâtre Français, Mademoiselle Rachel accepted it, and it was brought out on the 14th of April this year.

Having given a slight biographical sketch of Adrienne Lecouvreur, it remains to be seen what romance has added to reality in the drama.

The first act passes in the apartment of the Princess de Bouillon who is entertained while at her toilet with the gossip of the day brought to *levée* by a *petit abbé*. The rivalry between the two great actresses, Mademoiselle Lecouvreur and Mademoiselle Duclos, the patronage of the latter by the Princess herself, much, as the *abbé* remarks, to the surprise of the world of fashion, to whom the intimacy of the Prince with Mademoiselle Duclos, his gifts of diamonds, a *petite maison*, &c., are well known—all these items are communicated to the high-born lady, who replies



that all this is old news, and that, to have a better hold on her faithless spouse, she has out-generalled him, won over his mistress to her own interests, and is now informed of his doings before he himself knows his own intentions.

Other visitors enter, the *Prince* also. The conversation is still of *Mademoiselle Lecouvreur*, who is to come and recite a few scenes at a *soirée* of the *Princess*; the arrival of the *Count de Saxe*, his bravery, his exploits, his failure in his expedition, &c., are also subjects of discussion when the hero himself enters, and is finally left alone with the hostess.

In the drama, it is to the *Princess* that the *Count* is faithless. Hers were the chains that bound him previous to his leaving Paris on his last expedition. *Madame de Bouillon* is now tormented by those vague and apparently groundless suspicions that warn a woman that she has a rival. Why must she be left to learn of a stranger his arrival? Indeed this has been, with the exception of one to the Secretary of State—and—the Cardinal Minister, the very first visit he has made. He only arrived last night. Ah! was it the *Cardinal* or the *Secretary of State* who presented him with that exquisite bouquet in his button-hole? Oh dear, he had quite forgotten—a little flower-girl

at the door of the hotel teased him to buy it of her and \* \* \* “And you kindly did so to present it to me,” interrupted the subtle lady, possessing herself of the flowers which the *Count* dares not refuse.

The instinct of *Madame de Bouillon* has not deceived her. When he was last in Paris the noble adventurer had saved from the insults of several gallants flushed with wine, the fair *Adrienne Lecoureur*, on her way home from the theatre. Since then an intimacy had sprung up between the *protégée* and him whom she deems a poor officer of fortune, serving under the orders of the *Count de Saxe*. The first visit was to her.

The *Princess* goes on to speak of the steps she has taken in his behalf to obtain the troops he wishes to levy—the obstacles she has met with in high quarters, the measures she is intending to pursue, &c., &c. The *Count*, however, cannot in honor permit of her serving him with her influence and credit at Court under the idea that he loves her. He cannot accept her devotion under false pretences; he is on the point of undeceiving her, when the re-entrance of the *Prince* and *Abbé* prevent the confession, and he is obliged to bid her adieu, leaving the flowers in her hands.

The second act passes in the green-room of the

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Comedie Française. The actors are chatting with lords of the Court, until their turn comes to go on the stage. *Adrienne* is to play *Roxane*—her professional rival, *Mademoiselle Duclos*, plays in the same tragedy; but it is not the wish to excel her only that animates *Adrienne*. *Maurice*—she only knows him by that name—*Maurice* is in a box to the right—for him she must appear to advantage—for him she must win applause, must be admired!

In the meanwhile *Monsieur de Bouillon* has doubts of the fidelity of his mistress; her maid has communicated to him a note, written by *Mademoiselle Duclos* to the *Count de Saxe*, appointing a meeting after the performance, in the *petite maison* the *Prince's* munificence has lately given her. The enraged *Prince* thereupon invites all the actors and actresses to a supper that very night in the *petite maison* where he will surprise and shame his faithless mistress. *Adrienne* is invited and, knowing nothing of all these intrigues, accepts, because she is told the *Count de Saxe* will be there—the *Count* whom she is anxious to know that she may have an opportunity of soliciting of him the advancement of a poor lieutenant in his service.

The third act passes in the *petite maison*. The lady who meets the *Count* there is *Madame de*

*Bouillon* herself, who has borrowed the house of *Mademoiselle Duclos* and commissioned her to make the appointment.

Here we have the proud, the high-born *Princess de Bouillon*, descended from a King of Poland, closely related to the royalty of France, not only acting like a courtesan, but like the veriest idiot! To avoid compromising her reputation she admits into her confidence an actress known for the lightness of her conduct, the mistress of her own husband; she makes this woman her emissary, her secretary; she entrusts her with a secret that involves her honor—she borrows of her, to carry on an intrigue, the *petite maison* her own husband has furnished, and of which he has a key! Of all the contrivancies imagined by dramatists—and they are privileged to invent absurdities—this is the most improbable, the most monstrous!

The conversation between the *Princess* and the *Count* is, at first, of the obstacles his enemies throw in the way of his political and military schemes. The chief source of anxiety is an unfortunate note for 60,000 livres, to which is appended the signature of the improvident warrior. This note is in the hands of a Swedish nobleman, of whom the Ambassador of Russia is endeavoring to purchase it, in order to imprison

the *Count*, and thus put a stop to his conquest of Courland. The *Princess* has power and credit at Court, but she laments that she has not 60,000 livres to assist him with. The explanation that was to have been made in the morning is given now, but in the very moment when the angry lady insists on knowing who is her rival, the voices of the *Prince* and his merry guests are heard in the garden. The lady takes refuge in an adjoining room, yet not so quickly but what the husband catches a glimpse of a woman's dress as he enters through one door and she goes out of another. Convinced that it is *Mademoiselle Duclos*, and that he has it now in his power to mortify and expose her, he orders the doors of the house to be fastened, and forbids anyone being let out before daylight. The situation is critical, and the *Princess* is inevitably lost but for *Adrienne*, to whom, as she refused to come with him, the *Prince* had given a second key to let herself in after the performance was over. *Adrienne* recognises in the *Count de Saxe* the officer of fortune in whose favor she had come to solicit him. On his whispered assurance that the lady in the next room, on whom the party make such indiscreet comments, is not *Mademoiselle Duclos* nor anyone in whom he has any interest

faithless, *Maurice*, filled with love and gratitude, hastens to offer her all he has in his power, his name and the prospective Duchy of Courland. It is too late, the jealousy of the offended woman has outstripped his love, *Adrienne* is dying. She had received a casket sent in her lover's name, containing the bouquet of the first act—it had been poisoned by the *Princess*. The agony and death of the heroine fill the last act.

Aside from the numerous improbabilities of this drama, it cannot be denied that the interest is kept up unceasingly, that the situations are exceedingly dramatic and the characters well drawn. That of *Michonnet*, the old stage-manager is most excellent.

It has been said that this was the first time that Mademoiselle Rachel was called upon to utter prose on the stage. There was another far more serious objection to the part, one which, *certes*, the authors had not thought of, and which it was left to the genius of Mademoiselle Rachel to discover. In accordance with the fashions of her day, *Adrienne's* hair is powdered!—*Hermione's* Greek brow crowned with powdered tresses!—*Camille's* Roman locks sprinkled with flour!—*Melpomene* in a wig! The thing was not to be thought of: heedless of the anachronism the

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head presented, heedless of the unpleasant contrast the black hair of *Adrienne* made with the powdered puffs and curls of the other *dramatis personæ*, destroying much of the illusion, Rachel had her will. She subsequently saw the absurdity of the thing and conformed to the customs of that age.

Notwithstanding this and other disadvantages, and though she was far from equalling in it the triumphs she achieved in her own classic *repertoire*, Mademoiselle Rachel's performance of this charming character was very pleasing. Whatever may be thought to the contrary it is no easy task for an actress to take upon her the imitation of her own position. To mimic oneself is almost impossible. What is unconsciously done with ease becomes difficult the moment it is a part to be studied, and the actress runs the risk of setting it on stilts or lowering it to something too familiar and bordering on vulgarity. The real history of Adrienne Lecouvreur has shown that she was one of those privileged beings who unite the qualities that constitute the happiness of private life with the brilliant ones that secure fame and honor in a public one. As witnesses to her charming disposition we have her own letters, evidently written without study or disguise.

Such passages as the following paint the woman better than the pens of biographers could ever hope.

“May 5, 1728.

“You know how dissipated life is in Paris, and what are the duties inseparable to my profession. I spend my days doing nine-tenths of the things that are displeasing to me, in making new acquaintances I cannot avoid so long as I am in my present position, and which prevent my cultivating the old, or employing my time to my own taste otherwise at home. It is the fashion to dine or to sup with me, because several duchesses have thus honored me. These are persons whose goodness and charms would amply satisfy me, but whose society I cannot enjoy as I would, because my time belongs to the public, and I must gratify all who would know me or be set down as impertinent. For all I am so careful, my health, which is weak, causes me to offend; if I am obliged to refuse or fail to attend an invitation to a party from ladies I have never seen, or who care to see me merely from curiosity, or, if I may be permitted to say so, because I am the fashion: ‘Truly,’ says one, ‘what airs she gives herself!’ Another adds: ‘she acts thus because we are not titled.’ If I




am serious, for one cannot be very gay among people one does not know: 'Is this the woman who has so much wit,' remarks some one of the company. 'Do you not see she scorns us,' says another, 'and that one must know Greek to please her? She goes to Madam Lambert's.' I know not why I tell you these trifles. I have many other matters to speak of; but I happen at this moment to be troubled with a deal of such gossips, and am more than ever possessed with the wish to be free, and have no other study than to please those who feel real kindness for me and who satisfy my heart and mind. My vanity finds no compensation in a crowd for the lack of real merit. I do not care to shine; I find ten times more pleasure in saying nothing and in hearing good things, in being in the gentle company of worthy, virtuous people, than I do in being made giddy with all the insipid praises prodigally and at random bestowed on me. It is not that I lack gratitude or the wish to please; but to my mind the approbation of fools is only flattering inasmuch as it is general, and it becomes a burden when it must be purchased by reiterated and especial sacrifices."

The above is extracted from a collection of let-

ters of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur which was published after her death. In order to undertake the character of this remarkable woman, on her own stage too, though at a distance of a century, it was requisite that her representative should possess no small share of the qualities that adorned her prototype. Mademoiselle Rachel had one great qualification for the part—she could play the gentlewoman with perfect ease. This was indispensable to justify the remark of *Michonnet*, when *Adrienne* is surrounded by ladies of the highest quality :

“She figures as well as the whole of them in a *salon*.”

In the scenes with the *Princess* Mademoiselle Rachel was in her element, and consequently very much admired.



## CHAPTER III.

1849.

Benefit of Mademoiselle Georges—The Thespian Car in 1650 and in 1849—*Phèdre* without *Aricie*—An Audience behind the Age—A Tune to suit all Governments—Life in a Stage-Coach—A Promised Conversion—A Play without an Audience—The Théâtre Français *versus* Mademoiselle Rachel — Mademoiselle Rachel *condemned* to sing the “Marseillaise.”

IN June of this year the incident to which allusion was made in the last chapter in connection with Mademoiselle Georges occurred. This once-petted and idolised actress made an appeal to old friends who were willing to honour the memories of the past and to the children of a latter generation who might be curious to see once more what their fathers had applauded to the echo. To stimulate the indifference of a public too busy yet with political broils to care for theatricals, Mademoiselle Georges had solicited the aid of Madame Viardot and Mademoiselle Rachel, the present favorites of the few who still had time and

inclination for arts and artists. Madame Viardot had responded to the call with the good grace and willing zeal of an artist who understands and sympathises with griefs that decent pride would fain conceal from the world's eye. Mademoiselle Rachel was not so readily induced to come forward on this occasion offered to her of doing a praiseworthy action, but she finally consented to perform *Eriphile* in "Iphigénie." The *bénéficiaire* had, of course, undertaken *Clytemnestra*, the mother who so resolutely defends her child—defends her even against the father who consents to her death, against the priest who exacts it.

The actress who had so much at stake, who felt herself, moreover, sustained and encouraged by the interest with which an attentive audience followed her words, summoned all her energy, her remaining courage and passion, her wavering powers for one last superhuman effort; she put forth all her strength, and success was the reward. The traces that time and illness had worn on those finely-chiselled features momentarily vanished, a faint reflection of the halo of youth and beauty that shone over them when the first Empire and she were in their *apogée* of splendour returned to illumine her decline; the sun of bygone days regilded the noble ruins. The real monarch whose

power seemed to defy fortune was fallen long ago—his imperishable name was embalmed in the eternal pages of history. The mock-queen had outlived her opulence, her fame, her worshippers, to find herself compelled in her age to appeal to a public in whom no vestige of enthusiasm for art seemed to survive.

The announcement of two such names—Mademoiselle Georges and Mademoiselle Rachel—in the same play would, in other times, have drawn crowded houses. It barely sufficed to attract sufficient spectators to fill the *salle* of the Italian Opera-House. A *feuilletonist* of the day remarked very truly that the stage was dead. “We have made,” said he, “so much progress within the last eighteen months, in good sense, in fine arts and in liberty, that not one of the fine arts in this great nation has been left standing. Poetry is dead, painting and sculpture have carried abroad the noble works that maintained them. Howling, clamor and insult, have usurped the place of eloquence. Not a book, not a poet, not a painting!—nothing in the past, nothing in the future!”

Even this audience, got together with so much difficulty, could not but do justice to the talent brought before them that night. As for Made-

moiselle Rachel, she lost here an opportunity of doing a kind and amiable thing. Had she presented to her elder sister one of the numerous bouquets, or placed on her head one of the wreaths showered on the stage, thunders of applause would have followed the graceful act. But no, the demons of envy and jealousy seemed to possess her; angered by the approbation bestowed on Mademoiselle Georges, she sullenly refused to play in the "Moineau de Lesbie," announced on the bills for the second piece, and, notwithstanding the injury she was doing the *bénéficiaire*, and the pain she caused the young author, obstinately persevered in her refusal. Mademoiselle Rachel thought to punish the public for having dared to applaud another than herself. Madame Viardot, however, having cheerfully come forward to offer her services to make up the deficiency caused by the *tragédienne's* ill-tempered refusal, her delightful voice proved an ample compensation.

The months of June, July and August were, as usual, devoted to her profitable vacation. While Mademoiselle Rachel hardly deigned to play twice a-week in Paris, where she had a fixed salary, she was indefatigable in her vacations when the more she played the more she earned.

It is astonishing what an amount of fatigue the love of gain enabled this frail constitution to bear. She recoiled before no distance, no labour. As long as anything was to be got her nerves seemed steeled. The itinerary of one of these tours, as furnished by herself in a letter to Mr. Véron and published by him in the fourth volume of his "*Mémoires d'un Bourgeois de Paris*," we find confirmed in every particular. As it alludes to the *congé* of this year we subjoin it. It is dated May 26th, 1849.

Orleans . . .	29th, 31st	May
Tours . . .	1st, 2nd	June
Poitiers . . .	3rd, 4th	"
Niorl . . .	5th	"
La Rochelles . .	6th, 8th	"
Rochefort . . .	7th, 9th	"
Saintes . . .	10th, 12th	"
Cognac . . .	11th, 13th	"
Angoulême . . .	14th, 15th, 17th, 18th	"
Perigueux . . .	19th, 20th	"
Libourne . . .	22nd, 23rd	"
Mont-de-Marsan .	25th	"
Bayonne . . .	26th, 27th, 29th, 30th	"
Pau . . .	1st, 2nd	July
Tarles . . .	3rd, 4th	"
Bagnères . . .	5th	"
Auch . . .	7th, 8th	"
Toulouse . . .	10th, 11th, 13th, 14th	"
Narbonne . . .	16th	"
Perpignan . . .	17th, 18th, 20th, 21st	"
Carcassonne . .	23rd, 24th	"
Cahors . . .	26th, 27th	"
Aurillac . . .	29th, 30th	"

Clermont	.	.	1st, 2nd	August
Moulins	.	.	3rd, 4th	"
Nevers	.	.	5th	"
Bourges	.	.	6th	"
Blois	.	.	8th, 9th	"
Le Mans	.	.	10th, 11th	"
Laval	.	.	12th	"
Rennes	.	.	13th, 14th	"
St. Malo	.	.	15th	"
Jersey	.	.	17th, 19th, 21st	"
Caen	.	.	18th, 20th	"
Guernsey	.	.	25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 31st	"

To the above performances may be added those given in Bordeaux, Lebourne, and other places not mentioned in Mademoiselle Rachel's letter, as she had not yet signed the agreement at the time it was written. Altogether they number eighty-five in ninety successive days. To form some idea of the fatiguing nature of this departmental tour it must be borne in mind that not one mile of it was travelled by rail. An old-fashioned, lumbering French stage coach, comprising the usual divisions of *coupé intérieur*, *rotonde*, *imperial*, *cabriolet*, and *bâche*, was the vehicle provided for the whole journey. In the *coupé*, which was especially appropriated to the chieftainess, a bed was placed in order to facilitate as much repose as was compatible with this life of perpetual motion; at night spread out for a couch, in the day it was rolled up for a sofa. The princesses, maids of honor, and



damself of her suite, occupied the *intérieur* and disputed the corner seats. The emperors, kings, and lords of high degree had the *rotonde*; the *imperial* was assigned to the confidants and other small fry, who though not in very enviable seats as far as regarded sleep, had a fine view of the country from their elevated position. Under the *bâche* were stowed away the trunks, boxes, packages, and bundles, containing the wardrobe and stage paraphernalia; *Roxane's* dagger, *Cléopâtre's* worm, *Adrienne's* fatal bouquet, and *Judith's* sabre; regal mantles and poisoned cups, crown jewels and bag wigs.

Mademoiselle Rachel was not perhaps herself aware that she was taking art back to its primitive origin, and that her dramatic *diligence* was neither more nor less than an imitation of the tragic car of Thespis. With all due allowance for the difference of times and the progress of the present age, her caravan recalls that of which Scarron gives so amusing a description in his "Roman Comique."

In consequence of one of the little differences of opinion that sometimes disturbed the concord of the Felix family, Mademoiselle Rachel not always being inclined to place implicit reliance in her brother's arithmetical conclusions, in lieu of

Raphael, the usual nominal manager, a M. Prot filled that office on the present occasion.

While the *tragédienne* herself endured without a murmur this continual locomotion no other member of the company was permitted to allege fatigue as an excuse for non-performance of duty—even indisposition could not, unless very severe, be pleaded to obtain exemption. It was said—we will not vouch for the truth of the report—that on this or some other occasion, one of the actors, who had had leeches prescribed for some temporary ailing, was obliged to apply them in the coach, having been refused permission to stay behind, even for a day.

At Bourges, Mademoiselle Durey fell so severely ill while playing *Aricie* that Mademoiselle Rachel's own maid, Rose, was deputed to take the invalid back to Blois in the privileged *coupé*. Without an *Aricie* even *Phèdre* was incomplete; at least such was the opinion of the spectators, who demanded their money's worth. To satisfy a provincial audience always behind hand with the Paris fashions, yet who imagined they were closely imitating the follies of the capital in exacting it as a compensation for the missing bride of *Hippolyte*, Mademoiselle Rachel was obliged to perform the now obsolete "Mar-

seillaise." This complaisance on compulsion was exceedingly distasteful to the politic, but no longer political *tragédienne*. Opinion had completely changed color in Paris, and she was not inclined to have it reported there that she was still keeping up in the Departments this hackneyed tragi-comic farce. She would fain have imitated the wisdom of a certain organ-grinder. A passer-by, struck by the more than ordinary discordance of the instrument, which was playing the most incomprehensible, irreconisable jingle, in which, however, some faint reminiscence of the "Marseillaise" might now and then be distinguished, inquired of the proprietor what might be that tune. "Why, sir, look ye, between ourselves, its an old 'un of the year 1848, and seeing as how it wa'nt the fashion now-a-days, I just took and shifted about the wires a bit, and so made up a new tune as 'ull suit any government."

M. Hip. Guichard was the next that gave way to fatigue, Rachel was almost the only one that resisted to the last.

A *jeune première* was sent for to Paris, but she only joined the company at Laval.

At Bordeaux there was great rejoicing and as great subsequent disappointment among the members of the company. They had expected

to rest every other day during the engagement at the Grand Theatre; but their implacable Nemesis made arrangements to play on the off-nights at Libourne, eight leagues from Bordeaux. The hours not actually spent on the boards were passed in the coach. When not inclined to sleep the occupants of the caravan amused themselves with cards, or chatting.

It was during one of these nocturnal trips that Mademoiselle Rachel, relating how, when she had recited scenes from "Polyeucte," at Madame Recamier's, she had been complimented by an archbishop, who had remarked that one who pronounced with such fervor the celebrated passage: "Je sais! je vois! je crois!" could not but be a Christian at heart (see page 76) added "I most certainly will turn Christian before I die." Whereupon M. Roussel, one of the actors, inquired:

"For whose benefit, madam, will this extraordinary performance be given?"

This allusion to her readiness to adopt any part in life that was best suited to her interests, was received by the time-serving *tragédienne* with the look which, accompanying the famous *Sortez!* of *Roxane*, always brings down so much applause.

\* "Au reste, je ne mourrai pas sans être chrétienne." (sic)

M. Roussel was never after engaged to accompany Mademoiselle Rachel on her provincial excursions.

The country towns, though delighted with the honor of the celebrated *tragédienne's* visit, were not always provided with suitable buildings for the performances, and ludicrous incidents occurred in consequence. At Saintes, for instance, on the first night, the actors were dressed, everything was ready and the doors stood wide open, but not a spectator came. The dilapidated building had been stayed and propped up with sundry ingenious contrivances, but the report of its unsoundness had got abroad, and no one dared to run the risk of its tumbling down. On the next night, a safer house having been chosen, all fear was banished.

At the expiration of her *congé*, Mademoiselle Rachel had, in the month of September, quietly re-entered on her duties at the Théâtre Français. She continued to fulfil them with the most scrupulous punctuality until the beginning of October. Resolved, for motives which will subsequently appear, to persist in the resignation she had sent in on the 14th of October of the preceding year, and renewed, in accordance with the Decree of Moscow, six months after the first notification, on

the 14th of April, 1849, she had taken care to give her antagonists no hold upon her. In the meanwhile the *sociétaires*, aware of the loss that resignation entailed upon the company, diligently sought to invalidate it, or at least to win public opinion on their side and leave to Mademoiselle Rachel all the odium of these continual debates.

In accordance with their plan of leaving no means of conciliation untried, on the 12th of October, two days before the fatal day, the committee wrote to Mademoiselle Rachel to endeavor to persuade her not to forsake a company of which she was the pride, and which had contributed so largely to her fame. To these exhortations were added legal arguments, the most powerful of which was drawn from the 82nd clause of the Decree of Moscow. That clause provided that besides the notification and reiteration of the resignation, the *sociétaire* should at the time of tendering it make a declaration specifying that he or she never intended playing again in any theatre, whether French or Foreign. Mademoiselle Rachel having omitted to make that declaration, her resignation could have no immediate result until it was renewed in due form. Consequently she was requested to play *Adrienne Lecouvreur* on the following Tuesday and Saturday.

The lady's answer was short and uncompromising : her resignation, tendered a year ago, renewed six months after, was not a thing of so little moment that she should not have taken into consideration all its consequences and the duties it involved. The committee, not deeming this answer sufficiently explicit, caused the name of Mademoiselle Rachel to be replaced on the play-bills.

This act of authority called forth a letter published in the papers, in which the *tragédienne* complains that the committee sought to compromise her in the eyes of the public by the announcement of her name in the part of *Adrienne*, when they held her resignation which they knew to be valid. She also energetically repelled the charge of having demanded of her comrades "their money or their lives." Far from which, she asserted that she had declared to all candidates for the management that she was willing to consent to a reduction of salary to facilitate any arrangement conducive to the interests of the Théâtre Français.

"If I retire," added she, "it is because I believe that actors who are their own managers can with difficulty maintain the union so indispensable to their own studies, to the advancement of art and to the welfare of the theatre. I must have had

some experience of this to induce me to renounce the life of applause for which I am indebted to the Parisian public, and for which the happiest private life could afford no compensation."

Thus the Pythoness of the "Marseillaise" acknowledges that she also recognised the necessity of a king, or at least a dictator, and proclaimed that:

"Le pire des Etats est l'Etat populaire."

• The gauntlet she had thrown down was soon raised. To her letter dated the 14th an answer appeared on the 15th. One of the ablest partisans of her antagonists conducted their side of this newspaper controversy. After giving the reasons that have already been stated why her resignation was null, the committee congratulated itself somewhat ironically at learning that Mademoiselle Rachel intended to consent to a reduction of salary.

"This," said the dear comrades of Mademoiselle Rachel, "is an unexpected resolution that will not prove one of the least benefits promised to our stage."

But the future manager was advised, instead of taking advantage of the proposed reduction, to exact more regularity in the performance of duties.

"For the public, thus boldly invoked," added the writer, "will hardly believe that Mademoiselle



Rachel is anxious at the present day for the interests of the theatre, since she has only been able to average there fifty performances in nine months, while, during the ninety-two days her *cong  * lasted, she has managed to perform eighty-five nights ! ”

To the reproach of want of concord the committee opposed an energetic disclaimer. If there was discord it was urged that the apple was held by Mademoiselle Rachel, for, “ the public must at last be told the truth, Mademoiselle Rachel is her own manager, she never receives orders, she gives the law. It is she who fixes the days she chooses to play and what parts she will take ; she states how many—and the number is considerable—admittances, boxes, stalls, &c., she will have on nights when the interests of the house demand that none be given. \* \* \* Mademoiselle Rachel cannot have forgotten the many testimonials of regard which delicacy forbids our recalling. Her name placed on the bills, as never was that of Talma, and as was that of Mademoiselle Mars only towards the close of a career as long as it was brilliant, testified sufficiently of our deference to the rank we have given it among us.”

After this public rupture no conciliation was possible, and the committee revived the suit at law

commenced the preceding year, but left dormant in accordance with Mademoiselle Rachel's desires. On the 31st of October the nullity of the resignation, on the grounds already mentioned, was again alleged, and a claim was, moreover, put in for damages for infractions of duty on the 14th of October, 1848, and the 13th of January, 1849. M. Marie, the distinguished lawyer who had been Minister of Public Works under the Provisional Government, undertook the defence of the interests of the committee. The counsel for the *tragédienne* was the no less celebrated M. Delangle.

We shall not attempt to give the eloquent arguments of these two brilliant orators. We shall merely record such of the facts that came to light during the trial as may illustrate the motives that influenced Mademoiselle Rachel's conduct in a contest that did more honor to her head than to her principles of moral rectitude.

Among other charges brought by M. Marie was that of seeking to undermine the company and to obtain even at that very time, in high quarters, its reconstitution according to her own views.

"Does Mademoiselle Rachel," he exclaimed, "deem us ignorant of what is going on without these doors? Are we not well aware that if there is not in a high quarter the integrity and firm-

ness we find here, the company of the Théâtre Français will be sacrificed? Do we not know the new manager is already selected, and that, in case of success, Maedmoiselle Rachel is to re-enter—not into the company, she does not want *sociétaires*—but in the new management, where she will be all powerful, where she will enjoy enormous advantages, unconscionable privileges, unlimited *congés* and hundreds of thousand francs without the trouble of earning them. It is the knowledge of these things that causes us anxiety.”

The impatience of the public was great to hear the counsel for the defence. But on the day appointed for M. Delangle’s reply the interest had taken another channel. An incident that occurred on the very day after M. Marie’s eloquent argumentation had changed the whole course of the affair, justifying in every point his predictions. On the 15th of November a decree of the Prince President was published appointing M. Arsène Houssaye *Commissaire Administrateur* of the Government at the Théâtre Français. This was a reform that cut deeper than any of those previously attempted; it abolished at once all the privileges conferred on the committee by the 32nd article of the Decree of Moscow, privileges that gave them the entire management of the affairs of

the theatre. The committee vainly attempted to avoid this spoliation. They declared their readiness to receive M. Arsène Houssaye as Commissary of the Government, but they appealed against his nomination as administrator. The decree of Moscow was again invoked by M. Maire, who defended the *sociétaires*. But M. Chaix-D'Est-Ange, the distinguished lawyer who pleaded for M. A. Houssaye, grounded his arguments on the motives given in the new decree. He demonstrated that the bad management of the company had made it necessary that the Government should manage the funds of the subsidy of which it was responsible. He proved, moreover, that the decree attacked was an act of the administration, that the tribunal was incompetent to judge. This argument was admitted by the tribunal who, on these grounds, rejected the claims of the players.

The solution of the last question took much from the interest of Mademoiselle Rachel's defence, as well as from the issue of the suit in which she was personally engaged with the players. The committee was now a dethroned potentate, and whatever might be the decision of the judges, it was well known that Mademoiselle Rachel, who refused to submit to the *sociétaires*, would accept

the management of M. Houssaye, tear up her resignation and re-enter the Théâtre Français. However, as she had had rather severe charges brought against her by M. Marie in the name of her *dear comrades*, she felt obliged to repel them. On the 29th of November M. Delangle undertook this difficult defence and certainly made up in skill and brilliant oratory what he lacked in good reasons.

The pleading of M. Delangle was of course directly the opposite of M. Marie's. According to him, all the *tragédienne's* conduct had been a continual series of proofs of devotion, zeal, labor, disinterestedness and abnegation. If she had spoken of resigning in 1846 it was because she was ill, seriously ill. She might have been desirous in 1847 of a change in the management of the company without being at all hostile to it. That management was financially so defective that the company would have inevitably been ruined had not an energetic remedy been applied to the evil. In 1848, during the revolution, Mademoiselle Rachel had given proofs of the most admirable devotion to the interests of the committee. Her zeal knew no limits. M. Delangle presented this zeal under colors that certainly astonished the public and probably his very client.

"Every day," said the eloquent advocate, "Mademoiselle Rachel, regardless of her ill health, was on the boards. Yes! every day she condemned herself to the 'Marseillaise!' Yes! every evening she sang *this* 'Marseillaise' to the pit! Well, it could not be helped, and by that means the theatre and the treasury were filled, and the *sociétaires* testified their gratitude to Mademoiselle Rachel in the most flattering letter. Since then their language has changed. She had a right to her *congé* and she took it. On her return to Paris she was deeply wounded by the dismissal of M. Lockroy and resumed the project of retreat which had suggested itself to her mind in 1846."

After discussing the different points in debate with regard to the damages claimed, he says: the total of the performances of Mademoiselle Rachel, from the time of her *débüt* to the present day, have produced to the Théâtre Français the sum of 2,478,482*ls.*  $\frac{2}{3}$ . As to the demand of damages that was laid aside when the suit was dropped in 1848, the committee had admitted Mademoiselle Rachel's plea of ill-health. The salary kept back had been paid, and even the arrears, and with the added courtesy of sending the amount to her house.

Notwithstanding a sharp and witty reply from M. Marie, the decision of the tribunal was in conformity with M. Delangle's pleadings, that is, the resignation was pronounced to be legal, and that there was no case for damages, the committee having admitted the plea of illness and payed the arrears.

Mademoiselle Rachel did not gain her suit at the bar of public opinion, though she had been so successful at the Tribunal Civil of the Seine. The facts that had come to light in the course of the suit revealed principles which, though not reprehensible in the eye of the law, conveyed a very unfavourable impression of the *tragédienne* as an artist and in her social relations with her fellow-players. The old amateurs, partisans of the free company of the Théâtre Français contrasted her selfish and aggressive behaviour with the amiable and conciliating temper of Talma, the constant and laborious devotion of Mademoiselle Mars, even to the close of her long and noble career.

On leaving the Court House, Mademoiselle Rachel hastened to confirm her alliance with M. Arsène Houssaye : she did not, however, shew much submission to the chief she condescended to acknowledge, for she spent the remainder of the

year at home—probably with a view to prove her assertion that she needed rest—and did not make her re-appearance until the beginning of the year 1850.



## CHAPTER IV.

1850.

*Resumé*—"Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle"—"Angelo"—"Horace et Lydie"—*Congé* of Four Months spent almost Entirely in Germany—The Peasant Aunt—Mother and Daughter.

So far Mademoiselle Rachel had passed over two-thirds of her dramatic career. The first five years, from 1840 to 1845, were spent in study, in laborious endeavors to reach the place for which nature had designed her—at times encouraged and sustained, at others capriciously censured or judiciously rebuked by criticism. During the last period, from 1845 to 1850, we have seen her at the *apogée* of her talent. In the third, which remains to be narrated, fortune, not fame, seems to be the only end pursued by the *tragédienne*; the second being valued but as a means of increasing the first. We do not find her employing

every leisure hour in learning new parts, acquiring new titles to glory, or writing able comments on some favorite character, making it as Mrs. Siddons did that of *Lady Macbeth*, the study of her life—of this, indeed, she had never been capable. Mademoiselle Rachel courted fortune, not glory. She continued to appear in the tragedies of the ancient *repertoire* in which she was already known, but gave no revivals. She ventured into the domain of comedy, but the mantle of the inimitable Mademoiselle Mars had not fallen on her shoulders ; she gathered no laurels there.

The few efforts she made in the romantic drama, though not all failures, added little to her fame. In the creation of new characters she was hardly more felicitous ; of the five, *Lydie*, *Valeria*, *Lady Tartuffe*, *Rosemonde*, and the *Czarine*, the first was too insignificant to count in her *rôles* ; the second and fourth were complete failures ; the fifth is already forgotten ; the third, *Lady Tartuffe*, alone won success. Yet these five characters, three of which hardly survived their first appearance, were all the novelties brought forward by this favorite of the public in return for its constant homage and munificent liberality.

It seems strange that, in this book-teeming age during the sixteen years that her career lasted, no

play really worthy of such an actress was written. And if there had been it is doubtful if she would have accepted it! With all her extraordinary dramatic talent on the boards, this great *tragédienne* was wholly destitute of taste and judgment in dramatic literature. Of this she gave repeated proofs in her adoption of "Judith," "Catherine II." "Le Vieux de la Montagne," and, as we shall now see, in "Valeria," "Rosamonde," and the "Czarine." We mention but those that were utter absurdities—the remainder, with the exception of "Virginie," were but partially successful. Lacking discernment in her adoptions, we shall find Mademoiselle Rachel obstinate and capricious in her rejections, taking up with passionate enthusiasm Monsieur St. Ybar's atrocious "Rosemonde," and sustaining a lawsuit rather than keep her word and play Monsieur Legouve's "Medee!" In this last inconsistency she gave the measure of her gratitude and good faith, as well as of her taste and discrimination.

In the period of her career we are now entering Rachel suffers the first and most severe blow in her family affections, she loses Rebecca, her favorite sister. Constantly bent on satisfying her ruling passion, regardless of alienating the favor of her best friends, unheeding the ominous signs

been unequalled in her own line and who, moreover, possessed an advantage the tomb can alone confer; her great qualities were remembered and contrasted with the faults and shortcomings of her successors—*her* failings, if she had any, were forgotten.

The partisans of the new school who were most anxious to see Mademoiselle Rachel its representative, undaunted by the little success of her performance of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*, prevailed on her to appear in one of Victor Hugo's plays. The drama chosen was "Angelo," and the two heroines were personated by Mademoiselle Rachel and her sister Rebecca on the 18th of May. The sisters had to contend with the recent *souvenirs* of the greatest *comédienne* of her age, Mademoiselle Mars, and the queen of the drama, Madame Dorval, who had been brought together in the two antagonistic characters of *Tisbé* and *Catarina*.

The strongly-marked *rôle* of *Tisbé*, the violent passions that agitate her, love, rage, scorn, all carried to extremes, the powerful situations to which the plot gives rise, were all admirably suited to Mademoiselle Rachel's style and powers. Every one of the qualities she possessed in their utmost degree of perfection were called out here,

and *Tisbé* became her best character in drama, as *Phèdre* was her finest in tragedy. She completely retrieved what she had lost in public opinion by *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*. The description given of her on this occasion by Theophile Gautier is too vivid, too graphic to be omitted where the aim is to paint Mademoiselle Rachel in so important a part.

“One of Mademoiselle Rachel’s great qualities is that she gives so plastic a realisation of the character she represents. In *Phèdre* she is a Greek princess of the heroic ages, in *Tisbé* she personates an Italian courtesan of the 16th century. There can be no mistake—sculpture and painting could do no more. This graphic embodiment of the idea exercises a despotic influence on the audience the instant she appears. In tragedy she seems a figure detached from a *bas relief* of Phidias; in drama a Titian or a Bronzino descended from its frame. The illusion is complete. She is a great *artiste* as well as a great actress. Even her beauty is endowed with the most astonishing flexibility; at one time you have before you a sculptured hueless marble, at another a warm Venetian painting. She takes the coloring of the sphere in which she is to move—under the antique colonnade, a statue—under the *renais-*

sance ceiling, the richly-tinted portrait. Between the scene and the actress the harmony is always perfect."

The acting was no less truthfully described than the external appearance. The graceful indifference with which she listens to the *podesta's* laments, leading him ever away from the goal he seeks to reach, was extremely unaffected. An excellent piece of acting also was the scene where she narrates how her mother, the poor, friendless woman who sang *morlaque* songs on the public squares, was set free as she was being led to execution on the charge of having uttered seditious stanzas against the serene Republic of Venice—set free on the intercession of a lovely child, who begged of a senator, her father, that the hapless vagrant's life might be spared. She ran on with a careless haste as though relating it on compulsion to one incapable of understanding her feelings, yet, beneath the rapid, hurried utterance there was an almost painfully-intense depth of feeling. In the manner in which she answers evasively the suspicious interrogations of the tyrant, there was the ease of the thorough-bred lady and the skill of the finished actress. With true feminine impetuosity she runs back to tell *Rodrigo*—oh, nothing—only that "she loves him!"

The feline grace, the playful coquetry with which she obtains the key, the key on which depend several lives, from the *Modesta*, was as much admired by some as it was criticised by others in whose memories the perfect acting of Mademoiselle Mars was still fresh, and who thought, not without reason, there were words that never would be spoken again as they had been by her lips; for instance, the whispered cry of "*pauvre femme!*" One of the great scenes, if one can be singled out where all are fine, is that of the struggle between the two representatives of two great classes of modern society, when the virtuous woman and the courtesan are brought together, and the latter, having at last the mastery, tears her victim with the pitiless fangs of a hyena. Here, irony and insult on one side, terror on the other, are carried to their extremest limits. The oppressed one is free—the worm has turned, the disinherited rides on the neck of the oppressor! All the long-endured shame, the contumely and scorn heaped upon those pariahs of humanity, the implacable ferocity long dormant in those trampled hearts, vibrated in the voice of the actress. The condemned strikes the executioner, the criminal sentences the judge!

None but Hugo, that great star hurled from his high estate by blind vanity and senseless ambition,

could have given so splendid, so terrific, so sublime a picture of the courtesan trampling to earth the really innocent wife who has robbed her of her lover ! She turns the knife in the wound. And when the crucifix catches her eyes, when she forces the long-sought truth from the trembling victim, how completely disarmed and powerless stands the tigress, so cruelly triumphant but a moment since. The resignation with which the untutored child of love sacrifices her passion and her life to her lover's happiness, to gratitude, is truly sublime.

Mademoiselle Rachel was charged with overdoing her part, of reminding the spectator of Orestes pursued by the Furies—of seeking to irritate *Rodolfo* with a violence which if he knew anything of the heart of woman should have brought him to his senses. She incites, provokes and hurries him to the commission of the deed. Mademoiselle Mars, on the contrary, led *Rodolfo* to strike her by the most provoking calmness. Mademoiselle Rachel made it plain that she wished to be killed, and instantly. Mademoiselle Mars, even while accusing herself of the atrocious crime that is to rouse the lover to blind fury, trembled, hesitated, and, as she *really* wished to die, was careful not to excite the suspicion that might thwart her fatal design.



It was, however, scarcely just to institute a comparison between the *skill* of Mademoiselle Rachel and that of the most consummate actress that had ever trod those boards. Mademoiselle Mars attained perfection in her art by long years of experience and constant practice. She left nothing to chance, nothing to accident, but by a diligent study of the work in all its bearings continually sought the intention of the author.

"Angelo" derived additional interest from the fact that the two sisters played the two rivals. Rebecca lacked not tenderness—her acting revealed great depth of feeling—there was, perhaps, too unreserved, too free a display of it, to suit the part of the noble patrician dame who, even in the most trying moments, in the most passionate scenes, never gives way to her emotion with unguarded, unreserved freedom.

On the 19th of June Mademoiselle Rachel created the part of the heroine of Monsieur Ponsard's little one-act play, "Horace et Lydie." The acceptance "Le Moineau de Lesbie" had met with probably induced the champion of the classic school to try his hand at a similar bit of modernised antiquity. The theme of this little piece is the world-old-ever-new one of a love-quarrel. It is charmingly written, it reads delightfully, but on

the stage it is dull, flat, lifeless and insipid beyond measure. It is, perhaps, not to be regretted that it proved an utter failure, as its success would indubitably have brought before the public of the nineteenth century all the courtesans of ancient Greece and Rome in addition to the modern Lamias and Phrynes which the bad taste of the present generation tolerates on the stage.

*Pauline*—the chaste *Pauline* metamorphosed a second time into a Roman "*Dame aux Camelias*," sustained neither the character nor the piece. The chief attraction of this attempt to pourtray such scenes of Roman private life as good taste would wish banished from the boards, was the style of costume which in one of the lady's attitudes revealed more of the leg than is usually exhibited.

This year the *congé* of Mademoiselle Rachel lasted four months, during which she performed in London, in Hamburgh, in Berlin, in Dresden, in Potsdam. "*Le Moineau de Lesbie*" and "*Polyeucte*" were performed "by command" before the Prussian Court, the Count de Chambord being also present. The Queen condescended to send for Mademoiselle Rachel, whom she complimented very highly.

The King of Prussia never missed a performance, going sometimes alone to his *loge*. He

seemed particularly to enjoy the after-pieces, laughing as heartily at the fun contained in them as any *bon bourgeois de Paris* could have done.

When the company of a theatre is called to play before the Court, each member gets a "gratification" of a hundred francs. In preceding reigns the actors of the Théâtre Français were the only ones ever admitted to act at the Court of France. The present Emperor has had the companies of nearly all the theatres called in succession to play at Court.

The Germans testify their approbation by frequent recalling of the actors. In Vienna Mademoiselle Rachel was recalled one night seventeen times, another nineteen, a third twenty-one !

It was during this excursion through Germany that Mademoiselle Rachel gave another proof of the respect for family ties we have mentioned as characterising her in an eminent degree.

An old woman, dressed in the Sunday garb of the lower classes, made enquiry at the hotel where the celebrated actress was stopping, saying that she had been told her niece, Mademoiselle Rachel Felix was there, and she wished to see her. She was referred to Rose, the waiting-maid, who took her in to her mistress. Far from mani-

festing the annoyance of a *parvenu* at this claim of relationship put forth by one in such poor circumstances, the niece was extremely kind to her peasant aunt, made her stop and dine with her, and invited her to be with her while she was in town, and when she left settled upon her a sum which, in that country, was amply sufficient to make her comfortable for her life.

Another instance of the respect exacted by the parentseven of this daughter, of whom, at the same time, they were the most obsequious flatterers, we will give in the words of the narrator, Mademoiselle Aveuel.

“We were at this epoch in Berlin, and Mademoiselle Rachel, wishing to present some *souvenir* of her gratitude to the Princess Charlotte of Prussia, concluded that the most appropriate thing, as well as the most likely to please the august lady who honored her with her patronage, was a very magnificent copy of Emile Augier’s “Diane,” a unique copy presented to Rachel by the author, and containing on the fly-leaf some complimentary stanzas to herself. A note was to accompany this *envoi*, and to assist in inditing with due brevity and respect the important epistle I was called into council. While thus engaged, Mademoiselle Rachel requiring the

services of a servant, requested her mother to ring the bell. The old lady arose for that purpose, but not as quickly as the impatient daughter thought necessary, and the latter reiterated rather peremptorily :

“ Mais sonnez donc, ma mère.”

The old lady stopped short, and, altering her course towards the door, left the room, saying, with the offended dignity of a duchess :

“ Sonnez vous même ma fille.”

Rachel made no reply, but when the note was despatched, hastened to her mother's room to apologise and entreat her forgiveness of her imperious behaviour.

This was certainly a strange family. Whenever anything occurred to interrupt the harmony between the sisters they would give way to the most furious and uncontrolled passion, which they vented in every bitter and fierce expression that came uppermost. The only one who always preserved a certain dignity, even in her most angry moods, was Rachel; the most violent and inconsiderate was Sarah. When any dispute between Rachel and the other members of the family occurs, it is finally made up by the gift of some trinket—good temper and concord must be re-purchased by the richer one.

But in illness and misfortune, on any real occasion of grief or need, no devotion can be more complete than that shown by all the other members of the family to the afflicted one.

## CHAPTER V.

1851.

State of Theatricals in 1851—Despotic Influence of Stars and its Baneful Results—Dramatic Authors Manufacturers to order—"Valeria"—*Congé* of Five Months and a-half—Italy—Successor of Saint Peter and the Children of Israel—Rebecca.

THE year 1851, to which the *coup d'état* that took place at its close has given such historical importance, was not favorable to the drama. Society, shaken to its foundations in 1848, had had breathing time in 1849, and more especially in 1850; but its state at that epoch was one of transition and could not be of long duration. The Presidential Republic was but a temporary possibility that afforded a sort of truce to all parties, but all were alike impatient for its cessation. Each, ambitious of pre-eminence and anticipating the victory, watched its antagonists, weighed its own strength, and awaited the opportunity to offer battle and obtain the mastery. The wounds in-

flicted by the Revolution of 1848 were not yet healed; the penury that had been its consequence had not yet ceased; few could yet command that overplus which is usually devoted to procuring amusements. Minds were too much pre-occupied with considerations of vital importance to afford room for literature or theatricals. Anxiety for the future and the uneasiness arising from the unsettled state of politics, absorbed every thought. The only theatres that possessed any attraction were those that gave plays containing allusions and political satires. These, indeed, were crowded, and the applause with which such plays were received was loud, tumultuous, and prolonged. It was quite a relief to be able in public, and in common, to ridicule, hiss, and laugh at all the crazy ideas, all the paradoxical absurdities, all the dangerous systems, from the ruinous and subversive application of which so narrow an escape had been made.

Plays of this description, however, were not within the limits of the Théâtre Français: they belonged to the jurisdiction of the minor theatres, among which, for this class of performances, the Vaudeville took the lead. No other theatre made as good use of the sceptre of Momus or applied it so wittily and lustily on the crack-



brained pates of the day. Among the many pieces of this style suggested by late events, two were particularly excellent of their kind: "La Propriété c'est le Vol," and "Les Trois Parties de la Foire aux Idées." Frivolous as these works may be deemed, not to mention the powerful influence they had on public opinion, would be an omission in the history of the great effects that have resulted from petty causes. Their light sayings and piquant epigrams aroused the dormant good sense of the people. Their witty sarcasms gave rise to serious reflections, and as each spectator retired to his home, he felt grieved and ashamed that he should have been the dupe and the victim of so many follies.

In the meantime the Théâtre Français, deprived of the resource of chanting the "Marseillaise" was reduced to its masterpieces, the beauties of which the public had neither time nor inclination to appreciate. The receipts were by no means brilliant. During this year there was not one revival from the rich old classic *repertory*, and but one creation that might be called a two-fold one, but which was as unfortunate as it was singular. Like almost all deformities, this monstrous conception scarcely outlived its birth.

tact had thrown a shadow on her reputation as an *artiste* and given a bad opinion of her heart.

All the petty hates, the brooding impotent desires for revenge amassed in many hearts, smarting under some injustice, some long-remembered insult, eagerly embraced the opportunity of revenge the arrival of Madame Ristori subsequently afforded them, well knowing that every leaf added to her rival's crown would be looked upon by the jealous Jewess as taken from her own, that every token of approbation to the foreign star was a stab to that selfish cosmopolitan.

But we anticipate on the yet unnarrated epoch of that total eclipse. Suffice it for the present that we have shown the reason why such plays as "Valeria" and "Rosemonde" came to be received by the once severe *Comité de lecture* of the most enlightened and most severe stage in the world. Under such a *régime* the *coulisses* of the theatre necessarily became a sort of little *Bourse*, the *feuilletons* of criticism became bills of exchange, dramatic authors manufacturers to order, and the labours of intellect manufactured goods.

To this class of produce does "Valeria" belong. This drama in five acts and in verse, the joint

production of Messieurs August Maquet and Jules Lacroix, was constructed as a sort of pedestal on which the idol might be exhibited on high in two characters—as a *tragédienne* and a *cantatrice*—two very opposite rôles, and the last very inappropriate to the purpose the authors wished to carry out—the glorification of Mademoiselle Rachel. The performance, notwithstanding the real talent and the endeavors of the actress, was a dead failure. She had demanded the lion's share—she had it in the non-success.

This drama, historical only in the names of the personages, and purely of invention as to the incidents and plot, pertains with regard to the latter point to that class of romances of which, under the *pseudonyme* of Alexander Dumas, M. Maquet has been one of the most indefatigable and fertile producers.

The method most frequently made use of by these innovating historians is the re-habilitation of their heroes in the very teeth of contradictory historical facts. Authoritative documents are summarily set aside, and their place is usurped by absurd fancies, gratuitous hypotheses, and outrageous inventions, entirely at variance with time-consecrated tradition — Livy, Tacitus, and Juvenal are thrust aside and peremptorily

silenced by these modern re-modellers of ancient *dramatis personæ*.

"Valeria" is, after all, but a very long paradox, full of an affectation of erudition, the plot being that of a melodrama, halting on historical crutches. The language is versified prose.

A *hemistiche* of Juvenal in his satire, "Titulum mentita Lysicæ" accuses *Massalina* of having, under a borrowed name, perambulated the streets of Rome at night. Did the poet adopt too lightly the malicious slanders of the *chronique scandaleuse*, or was it in the name of rigid, inflexible truth that he stigmatised the imperial courtesan? What has remained an unsolved question so many centuries might still be left a doubt for future generations, but surely there is no cause why the contrary supposition should be warmly supported against the authority of the Latin poet and without the corroborative testimony of a single line in the ancients.

The best proof that the authors were somewhat dubious of the reception their white-washed heroine would meet from the public was that they dared not present her under her well-known name, the name that has descended to us as the synonyme of everything utterly and irretrievably vicious in woman, as the name of the proverbially

infamous creature that was depraved among the depraved, so foul indeed that she added a darker stain to the throne whose seat was desecrated by the imbecility of a Claude, whose steps supported a Narcissus, a Pallas, *parvenus* of favor, freedmen who had earned their Court promotion, not by talent like Horace, but by villainous pandering to vice and the ready espionage of the moment. They dared not call her *Messaline*, they chose her less-known appellation of *Valeria*, and under this title she has undergone a complete transfiguration; they made this creature of their own invention, if not a vestal, at least, the friend of *Elia*, a priestess of Vesta on whose bosom her immaculate spirit takes flight.

To facilitate this startling assertion, the authors have made use of a modern invention. *Valeria*, the Empress, has a sister, *Lysisca*, who is in exterior appearance exactly her counterpart, while in morals she is diametrically her opposite. This sister, forsaken in her infancy, has become the most notorious courtesan in the Roman Empire; her beauty, her adventures, are the common talk. *Valeria*, the imperial sister, chaste, noble-minded, generous and compassionate as she is fair, is guided in all she does by maternal ambition. She is unceasingly devising the means of foiling

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the intrigues of *Agrippina*, her husband's niece, who seeks to raise her own son *Domitius*—afterwards *Nero*—to power at the expence of *Britannicus*, the son of *Valeria*.

The rival mothers find their pretensions supported by the two freedmen. *Pallas* intrigues for *Agrippina*; *Narcissus* watches over the safety of the Empress, prevents her falling into the toils of her enemies, or rescues her when she has done so. Each has his own interests, ambition alone stimulates the zeal of *Pallas*, ambition and love that of *Narcissus*. Thus the latter, though seeking every means of securing the triumph of *Valeria*, persecutes to the utmost of his power the only honest man in the play, *Silius*, a young-old Roman, cut out on the pattern of Corneille's heroes, and a very secondary rôle, although meant to contrast with that of *Claude*.

The *Emperor* himself divides with *Mnester*, a dancer, the favorite lover of *Lysisca*, the task of amusing the public. This *Claude*, by the way, was a Frenchman, born in Lyons, the first of his nation raised to the throne of the Cesars, and it is strange the authors should have chosen to bring in this weak, pedantic, drunken buffoon, loading him, moreover, with all the odium they could add to the character. *Claude's* hobby is to be always

judging causes; he judges *Mnester* because he would not dance, *Silius* because he has in his portico busts of Brutus and Casius, but forgives him on *Valeria's* remark that they are works of art which even he, the Emperor, might be willing to admire. *Silius*, however, has committed a more unpardonable crime. A letter, intercepted by *Narcissus*, is laid before the *Emperor*; in this fatal epistle the stern young Roman, writing to his friend *Cecina*, has said that "folly united to crime" occupied the imperial throne. *Silius*, condemned to the lions, kills the monster that was to devour him, and is taken to his own house merely wounded. It seems he had seen *Lysisca* and mistaken her for the *Empress*, and hence his cruel remark. *Cecina*, his friend, falls into the same error; and all the *dramatis personæ*, whether unintentionally or maliciously, committing the same mistake from beginning to end of the five acts, the result is the most irretrievable confusion, the most intricate *imbroglio* conceivable, amid which the few interesting situations and fine passages are quite lost.

The second act is unquestionably the least objectionable. The scene passes in the dwelling of the wounded *Silius*, whose friends are preparing his flight. *Valeria*, taking the opportunity of one

of *Claude's* orgies, comes alone, and at night, to justify herself to the only man whose esteem she deems worth possessing. She owns her love for him who slandered without knowing her, and ends by asking the support of his strong arm and influence with the people, for her son, continually exposed to perish by the manœuvres of the opposite faction. It never appears clearly whether the ruling passion is the maternal ambition of the *Empress* or the love of *Valeria* for *Silius*. While virtuous and political speeches are interchanged in the house of *Silius*, in the opposite dwelling *Lysisca* is entertaining her lover, *Mnester*, in the street, *Agrippina* and her spies are on the watch, and *Narcissus* and his spies are letting themselves into the house of *Silius* through a private door. *Lysisca* is arrested to be used as a tool of *Agrippina*, and *Valeria* is enabled, under the escort of *Narcissus*, to return to Mount Palatin.

The remainder of the drama is a series of improbabilities. In the absence of the *Empress*, who is openly gone to Baïa under pretence of her son's health, but in reality to prepare a revolution, the courtesan, *Lysisca*, and her lover, *Mnester*, are brought into a room of the palace, where a splendid banquet awaits them, and they are repeatedly told to "consider themselves at home." At first



the worthy pair are somewhat frightened as well as surprised, but finally, with the assistance of several cups of the rich wines so temptingly placed within their reach, the birds become accustomed to their splendid cage. *Lysisca* especially gets so unconcerned, so merry, with the aforesaid help, that she indulges in a Bacchanalian song of an ultra-anacreontic taste. This scene has been got up for the edification of *Claude*, who, drunk with *Hippomane*, is brought by *Agrippina* to witness the scandalous debauchery of the suppositious *Empress*, whom he imagined on the way to Baïa. In the effervescence of his horse-tipsey rage he signs a deed of divorce, which has been drawn up in readiness, and the sentence of death follows. But at that moment the real *Valeria*, surrounded by her guards, makes her appearance. The sottish *Emperor* does not see her, for he has just fallen asleep on the couch; the baffled conspirators cannot get him away, but manage to stab the dancer and hurry off *Lysisca*, who is kept by them for some future occasion. *Pallas* had given orders for the assassination of the *Empress* at Baïa, but the wary *Narcissus* had warned and made her hasten back.

*Valeria*, triumphant, surrounded by the *Generals Corbulon, Plantius* and others, free by

the act of divorce is secure, for she holds *Claude* prisoner, and has given orders that to her alone he can be delivered. *Valeria* is going to reign, and with her innocence and virtue. She is about to marry *Silius*, when his friend *Cecina* arrives, and spoils everything. *Cecina* swears in the presence of the army and on the innocent head of her child that the imperial *Valeria* is a common courtesan. The rest may be easily guessed—the scandalised generals beat a hasty retreat. *Claude*, delivered by *Pallas*, and *Lysisca*, whom the guards mistake for the *Empress*, is reinstated on the throne, and sends a centurion to the forsaken *Valeria* with the order for her death. Meanwhile the assassination and decapitation of *Lysisca*, accomplished by *Agrippina* and *Pallas*, render all ulterior justification impossible, and leave the memory of the *Empress* blackened throughout all ages. This last comforting news is told to *Valeria* by *Narcissus*, who finds out the existence of the sister and her death at the same time. The discovery is, however, very satisfactory to *Silius*, who promises to survive the *Empress* to publish the facts and clear her fame. It is not very likely that *Agrippina*, who comes in to enjoy her rival's death pangs, will let him perform this duty. The dying agony of *Valeria* is rendered ridicu-

lous by the absurd prophecy with which she curses her rival :

“ Ton fils sera Néron, ton fils tuera sa mère ! ”

The two pens that worked on this drama are easily distinguishable ; the designer, who drew up the plan, and the poet, who scattered here and there some fine verses, that sparkle amid the rubbish with which it is filled. Above all is distinctly apparent the imperious will of the actress, who exacted that all the interest should centre in her part, and that the other characters should be reduced to the most insignificant proportions. In her eagerness to deprive everyone else of any share of success, she assumed the responsibility of a failure the most complete and irretrievable.

The difficulty of representing two characters in which physical and moral attributes are so extraordinarily similar and dissimilar, was enhanced by the obvious attempts the actress made to establish a difference. She spoke the part of *Valeria* in a deep bass, and that of *Lysisca* in her sharpest keys. The effect produced by these alternate chest and head notes was far from agreeable. As for the song, she had much better have left that out altogether ; singing was not her *forte*, and of all songs this certainly was in the worst taste.

This year Mademoiselle Rachel prolonged her

*congé* to five months and a-half. She left Paris on the 31st of May, and, after giving two performances in Boulogne, proceeded to London, where she had secured a very profitable engagement for two months. She received of Mr. Mitchell 10,000fr. for twenty-five performances, free of all expense, even to that of her hotel bills.

From England she returned to the Continent, and performed in the following towns: Antwerp, Brussels, Liege, Namur, Cologne, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Pesth, Gratz, Lintz, Trieste, Venice, Milan, Navarre, Turin, Genoa, Naples, Rome, Florence, and Livourne, returning *via* Marseilles to Paris. She had been extremely well received during this tour. Raphael, who was the manager of his sister's company, had made a preliminary excursion and prepared the way for her. At Turin, the young King placed at her disposal, free of expense, the Teatro Regio, which is always closed during the summer. Mademoiselle Rachel had decidedly furthered her own interests when she obtained a change in the administration that permitted of such excursions.

It was reported that when Rachel was in Rome she had been desirous of receiving baptism from the hands of the Holy Father. She had been several times heard to announce her determination

to adopt Catholicism, but it is difficult to ascertain if one so accustomed to play a part off as well as on the stage, was ever really sincere. She may, however, have been so at the moment under the powerful influence of certain impressions. Hers was a very excitable nature, and it was difficult for an *artiste* possessing to so high a degree the sense of the grand and the beautiful not to be deeply struck with the solemnity, pomp, and splendor with which the Church celebrates its mysteries.

We will not vouch for the truth of the report that Rachel met, *as by chance*—it having been previously arranged thus—his Holiness in the gardens of the Vatican, and, kneeling, avowed her firm resolve to be a Christian.\* But we have the authority of an eye-witness of undoubted veracity for her behaviour on her return from her visit to St. Paul's and the Vatican. She came into the room where her sister Rebecca and one other person were sitting, and for some time remained mute and absorbed in thought, walking up and down with knit brow and abrupt, agitated

\* However improbable this may appear, it is not more so than the very recent presentation of a well-known Israelite banker, his wife and daughter, to the Vice-gerant of Christ, and successor of St. Peter. The conversion of a soul was surely of more value than the probable benefits of a railway.

gestures. When she spoke at last it was to utter ejaculations of admiration and awe. To the questions addressed to her she returned no direct answer, but exclaimed in broken disjointed phrases :

“Yes, *this* is the true faith ! This is the God-inspired creed ! None other could have accomplished such works ! Truly I will be one of them yet ?”

Rebecca heard this with intense indignation, and remonstrated with extreme warmth against the proposed apostacy, repeating at intervals as though to clinch her arguments :

“Oh, what would Sarah say ! Oh, how I wish Sarah were here !”

The temper of Sarah was dreaded by all the family, and had its weight even on Rachel.

The witness of this singular scene was astonished at the patience with which the elder sister endured the reproaches of the younger. The *tragédienne* vouchsafed no reply, but, throwing herself on the bed, remained there engrossed in her own reflections.

The other members of the Felix family, though not practicers of its forms, are staunch adherents of their faith. Rebecca had much of Rachel's serious, contemplative turn of mind. She never

could understand a jest on certain subjects. The female members of the company having gone to visit the church of St. Jean de Latran, those who were Catholics undertook the ascent of the stairs in the usual manner. An ancient dame of very stout proportions preceded them, and the aspect she presented to those behind her, as she crept slowly up on her knees, was so exceedingly ludicrous that, after sundry vain attempts to preserve a becoming gravity, the young women found it impossible to suppress a titter. When they reached the top, Rebecca, who had ascended the other way, and had seen their untimely merriment, severely reproached them :—

“ Were I a Christian,” said she, “ and performing an act I deemed meritorious in the sight of my God, I would die rather than indulge in such profane laughter ! ”

## CHAPTER VI.

1852.

"Diane"—"Louise de Lignerolles"—Invitation from the King of Prussia—Severe Illness—Homœopathic Doctor—Appearance at the New Palace of Potsdam—Presentation to the Empress of Russia—The Czar Nicholas and Mademoiselle Rachel—Return to Paris—Prolongation of Life—"Aspaise"—"Rosemende."

ON the 23rd of February of this year Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in the part of *Diane*, in Emilie Augier's drama. The greatest fault of this work is that its chief points are copied from Victor Hugo's "*Marian Delorme*," with this difference, that what are in the latter beauties are in the former defects. The age—that of Louis XIII.—the subject—the edict against duelling—several of the scenes and several of the personages present a striking resemblance. The charming *Marian Delorme* is spoiled by being metamorphosed into a very uninteresting spinster, and



*Didier*, that splendid figure of romance, into a hair-brained boy-brother. This evident imitation is the more surprising, if it was intentional, as M. Augier is a partisan of the classic school, and consequently no admirer of the great innovator.

Between the talent of the two authors and the respective merits of their works, no comparison can be established. Even were the drama of M. Augier cut out in as masterly a style as that of Victor Hugo, it would yet lack the magnificent poetry in which the latter has arrayed his story.

Notwithstanding the imitation that appears in the very first act, the play of "*Diane*" opens well. The heroine and her brother are the descendants of an ancient house, shorn of its former splendour and reduced to so low an ebb that *Diane*, who is the elder, is compelled to resort to all the expedients of proud poverty to maintain her beloved and only brother in his rank and station. The youth, the last male of a long line of nobles, is the object of the most affectionate and watchful solicitude on the part of the fair young mother-sister. It is midnight, and, late as is the hour, *Diane* and *Parmejon*, a faithful old follower,—a sort of Caleb Balderstone—are busily engaged making a doublet for the heir. The good old man gives a very pretty enumeration of the

divers trades and callings he has exercised in behalf of the beloved boy.

“Que de metiers il m’a fait faire le jeune homme !”

The illustrious pair is suddenly startled by the irruption of four young gallants, *Messieurs de Pienne, de Boissy, de Fargy, and de Cruas*, in pursuit of a fair maiden, *Margueritte*, who, on her way from midnight mass, was going to the Hotel de Rohan. A young girl of respectable parentage treading the streets of Paris at that hour and alone, when we have it on the authority of Boileau that thirty years later the streets of the capital of the most civilised country in the world were, at eight o’clock in the evening, *des coupe gorges*, shows bad choice of hours at all events. The first act goes roundly to work, for in this scene we have the lady whose house has been so unceremoniously invaded, falling in love with one of the wretches whom she has just—and very properly—ordered out, and the wretch, *M. de Pienne*, at once reciprocates. *M. Paul*, the brother, who makes his *entrée* through the balcony, falls in love with the errant *demoiselle*, who is no less suddenly impressed in his favor. The scene between old *Parmejon* and young *de Pienne* is full of energy. The aged servitor draws his sword to repel the insolent intruder, who, in

derision, affects to parry merely with his cane. *Diane* stops the unequal combat, and the noblemen, admiring her divinity, respectfully apologise and retire, hat in hand. The kindly expostulations of the sister with her too flighty brother are very sweetly written, and, indeed, the whole of this act is lively and replete with interest.

The second act contains what is intended for the main subject, the groundwork of the whole drama—a conspiracy against the hero of the day, *Cardinal de Richelieu*. In “*Marion Delorme*,” Victor Hugo has also chosen this great personage as the Fate in whose powerful grasp the threads of all these petty existences are held; he also raised an altar to that great genius, but—and there is the greatest proof of his superiority—he left the idol behind the veil. In Hugo’s play *Richelieu* never appears in person—he is everywhere felt, he is seen nowhere, he moves all the wires, the *dramatis personæ* are, by their own showing, but the puppets of his will. The other had his choice of two great symbols, *Louis XIII.* and *Richelieu*; he chose the King for the material image and the Cardinal for the presiding genius, the WILL.

“Et que dit de la cour le roi ?

Le Cardinal n’est pas content du tout !

Le roi se porte bien sans doute ?

Non pas ! le cardinal a la fièvre ou la goutte."

The Cardinal is the main-spring, the soul of all things ; the very omission of any visible presence imparts a mysterious awe to the most seemingly insignificant things overshadowed by his influence.

But M. Augier was of opinion that he could not have too many great personages figuring ostensibly on his canvas, and boldly laid hands on both—the timid, wavering, passive, melancholy monarch, and his energetic, iron-willed, stern minister. The conspiracy itself is a sort of child's play, neither exciting nor interesting ; there is no justifiable hatred, no well-grounded motive ; those engaged in it play at conspiracy as they would at *lansquenet*, merely as a pastime. Why, or how they mean to kill the Cardinal, they do not seem to know. None of the conspirators are at all thinking of their enterprise. The *Duchess de Rohan*, who lends her house to their meetings, is solely thinking of *M. de Pienne* ; *M. de Pienne* of *Diane* ; *M. de Fargy* and *M. de Boissy* are little else than supernumeraries. As for *Margueritte's* father, the fourth plotter, he is a caricature with whom no man in his senses would risk his head.

In this second act we are at the Duchess' hotel, where all the personages, save the King, his

minister and his minister's minister, *Laffemas*, are present. The Duchess, who has been solicited by her god-daughter, *Margueritte*, to interfere to prevent her marriage with *M. de Cruas*, to whom her father has promised her, the Duchess tells *de Cruas* no gallant gentleman would wish to obtain a lady's hand against her will. *De Cruas*, piqued, replies he has no desire to marry a *coureuse de nuit*. *Paul* strikes the insolent noble across the face with his glove. Here is an evident copy of the second act of "*Marion Delorme*"—a provocation and a duel. Even the name of *Marion* herself is introduced in the conversation in very much the same manner as it is in Victor Hugo's drama.

The duel takes place between the acts, and *Paul* wounds or kills *de Cruas*, who is seen no more. The second act has some excellent scenes, though *Mademoiselle Diane*, in her anxious solicitude for her brother, shows rather more knowledge of the sword-exercise than befits the character of a fair and modest young gentlewoman in an age when women had not yet learned to glory in the possession of manly accomplishments. There is something very ridiculous and unseemly in this jargon of the fencing-school issuing from the rosy lips of a true woman.

In the third act of "*Diane*," as in the third act of "*Marion Delorme*," we have the presence of the Cardinal's right hand—the terrible *M. de Laffemas* using his cunning to worm out the secret of young *Paul's* retreat—hunting the duellists in both dramas. *M. de Piemme* has concealed the brother of his secretly-beloved *Diane* in a recess of the wall in his own apartment; the sister goes to see *Paul*, and in so doing compromises his life and her own honor, for she is traced to *de Piemme's* hotel by the jealous Duchess and the blood-hound *Laffemas*. The Duchess attributes the presence of *Diane* to love for *de Piemme*—the astute *chef de police* draws the inference that her brother is concealed there. *Laffemas* threatens to destroy the hotel to the very foundations, and *Diane*, to save her brother, heroically declares she is *de Piemme's* mistress.

We will not cavil at the forgetfulness of the author who makes *Paul* complain to *de Piemme* when they are alone, that he can *hear nothing* in his hiding-place, and then shortly after brings him out of it because he *has* heard the discussion, and will not accept his sister's sacrifice of her good name.

We have now reached the fourth act, in which the comparison between the two dramas is un-

avoidable from beginning to end. In the one *Marion* goes to solicit her lover's pardon of the King—in the other *Diane* craves her brother's of the Cardinal Minister.

By the way, when *M. de Pienne* says to *Diane* : "This is the King's closet," why should *Diane* question if it is that of the King of France? there is but one King there.

In both dramas the King is in black, the King is sad, the King has the spleen.

*Diane*, from behind a curtain, witnesses a scene between the King and the Cardinal. Struck with the greatness of soul, the vast intellect of this sole prop and pillar of a kingdom, she determines to save him from the blow that threatens him. The time appointed by the conspirators is when the Cardinal goes on a visit to Monsieur, the King's brother. *Diane* abruptly exclaims :

"Go not to Monsieur's!"

When *Richelieu* inquires what prompts her to warn him, and why she seeks to save the man who is about to take the life of her young brother, she replies that "she devotes herself to the State!" The Cardinal insists on knowing the particulars, who? — how? — when? — where? — why? Her brother's head is to be the forfeit if she refuses to betray the names of the conspirators. In the end

the Minister relents and grants the young man's pardon without condition; but he is no less determined to find out what he wants to know some other way.

In the fifth act *Paul* marries *Margueritte*. The *Duchess de Rohan*, still jealous of *Diane*, breaks open a will made by *de Pienne* when in danger of losing his head, and finds out what *Diane* herself has hitherto ignored, his love for the latter. Every obstacle is destroyed, the lovers are going to be happy, when the terrible mar-joy, *Laffemas*, comes in and sets all wrong again. *Diane* frightened by the black looks of the Cardinal's emissary, guesses his errand, and, to save *de Pienne*, declares he is indifferent to her—she does not love him—she'll take her share of life's happiness in the love of her brother's children :

“Je vais être grand mère!”

A lame and impotent conclusion.

Sum total : Very little love-making—very little ambition—no powerful passions—a pale reflection of Victor Hugo's genius.

Mademoiselle Rachel wore a costume designed by Meissonnier with the faithfulness and good taste that distinguishes that painter. But however elegant her dress it was not nearly as becoming to the actress as her antique draperies, or even



the fanciful and rich dress of the Venetian courtesan, *Tisbé*. Two or three of the passages of this *rôle*, so very unsuited to her style, were spoken with her grand energy and passion, but there was no room for her powers, she was cramped and evidently out of her sphere in this tame, unmeaning framework.

On the 6th of May Mademoiselle Rachel made another unfruitful excursion in the domains of Mademoiselle Mars. She appeared in the great *comédienne's* creation of "Louise de Signerolles." This drama in five acts, the joint production of Messrs. Prosper Dimaux and Ernest Legouvé, was first brought out in 1838, and was very successful. The revival by Rachel this year was hardly noticed by the press, so complete was her failure.

Her summer *congé* was marked by one of the most brilliant triumphs of her career. She had been invited by the King of Prussia to visit his Court, and, although suffering from a painful nervous affection that left her no rest, she resolved to achieve the journey.

It required no less than the determined will of which Rachel had given so many proofs in conquering fatigue on former occasions, to carry her through on this one. This illness was, with the exception of the one of which she died, the most severe she

ever had. Deprived of sleep, of appetite, consumed by a slow fever, troubled with fearful hallucinations, that brought with them suicidal ideas, she arrived in Brussels completely exhausted. Yet, notwithstanding this prostration of mind and body, she played with even more than her usual animation and fire, sustained by a feverish and dangerous nervous excitement, which imparted a momentary power for which she paid dearly after the play was over. Great would have been the terror and admiration of the uninitiated spectator who, after witnessing one of the performances that electrified her audiences, could have seen her, the Circé, but a moment before so powerful, so imperious, so fascinating, now so exhausted, so breathless, so nearly lifeless, carried off in the arms of her maids to the sleepless bed she was to leave but to be brought back to make the same efforts with a like result.

In one of the too numerous letters she either dictated or wrote, Rachel herself mentions this state of over-excitement.

“The public, the footlights, father Corneille, and even my own costume, impart a fictitious strength which enables me to act my part; that done I am again powerless, and often remain sunk in melancholy until the next performance.”

It was under such disheartening circumstances that she gave four performances in Brussels. While there, a circumstance occurred which was to rescue her from this terrible state of suffering. The elder Count Lehon spoke to her in such high terms of a doctor who had effected an extraordinary cure in the case of one of his relatives, that Rachel, though almost hopeless of relief, consented to see him. M. Varlez was a homœopathic physician too, and the *tragédienne* had, on a former occasion, experienced great benefit from the prescription of one of his *confrères*. After a thorough examination of the case, the disciple of Hanemann undertook the cure, if the invalid would promise the strictest observance of his injunctions. The mode of communication being settled, she continued her journey. A friend who was with her had undertaken to write and forward to M. Varlez daily and circumstantial bulletins of the symptoms and effect of the treatment to which she was subjected. The physician returned minute instructions and prescriptions.

This singular treatment *by post* eventually effected a cure, though the progress towards it was slow. There was even at Aix-La-Chapelle so severe a crisis, predicted, however, by the doctor, that her life was thought in danger.

The intended journey to Berlin was countermanded, and the *tragédienne* requested to go to Potsdam.

This change in her movements gave rise to the most absurd conjectures; a political mystery was attached to that which had the most simple and natural explanation. The real cause was the shortness of the sojourn the Empress of Russia was to make in her brother's dominions, and the state of Her Majesty's health, which precluded her enduring the fatigue of public *fêtes* and receptions. It had, therefore, been decided that whatever amusement was procured for the illustrious invalid should be enjoyed *en famille* in the retirement of the royal residence.

On the 8th of July Rachel gave her first performance in the new palace of Potsdam, appearing, as usual, in *Camille*. \*

On her arrival at the palace, whither she had been summoned early, the *tragédienne* found a sumptuous dinner awaiting her. With a view to her honor, it had been arranged that the scenic queen should dine only with such of her *attachés* as she chose to invite, while the secondary personages, the small-fry of confidants, traitors, second-hand heroes, &c., &c., were fed at a separate table. But Rachel had the good taste to

say she could not admit of such distinctions, adding that on the eve of a great battle a good general should mess with his soldiers.

As the performance was to take place late in the evening, one of the royal carriages was placed at the *tragédienne's* disposal, and the King's reader accompanied her on an excursion round the Chateau of Sans Souci; in the course of the drive she met the Crown Prince and Prince Frédéric of the Netherlands, who were profuse in their compliments.

In the evening *Camille*, elate with hope and pride, played with all the energy of which she was capable, and was greatly admired. She was presented, by desire of Her Majesty, to the Empress of Russia, who graciously said :

“I have often regretted, mademoiselle, the *étiquette* that forbids external tokens of approbation ; but, had it been otherwise, to-day we could not have applauded, so great was our emotion.”

The King of Prussia was equally courteous, and all present seemed greatly pleased.

A few days after, the Emperor Nicholas arrived at Potsdam, where he was to remain but two days, the last of which, the 13th of July, was the birth-day of the Empress. The weather being too warm to permit of any enjoyment in *salons*

blazing with lights, it was arranged that the little *fête* should take place in the open air, and that the *tragédienne* should there give readings from her chief *rôles* before the Imperial and Royal families and their suites. The scene chosen was the pretty little Isle of Peacocks. She gave several scenes from "Virginie" and all the second act of "Phèdre," and scenes from "Adrienne Lecouvreur." Her august audience of crowned heads testified enthusiastic approbation. The Emperor assured the *tragédienne* that she was greater than even her reputation, and hoped she would give him the pleasure of seeing her next in his own dominions. A hint of this invitation had already been dropped by the Empress. It will be seen that the rendezvous was not forgotten on either side.

The Czar, when speaking of the *tragédienne*, was standing before her chair; on her attempting to rise, he remarked that her exertions must have fatigued her, and desired her to remain seated. On her respectfully insisting, he took both her hands and gently held her down, saying:

"Remain, mademoiselle, I beg, unless you wish me to retire."

Such kindness and condescension from such quarters was sufficient to turn wiser and steadier

heads than that of the young *artiste* whom talent had ennobled. But in relating the events of this proud day to the member of the press by whom it was intended they should be repeated to the public, Rachel made a remark that was altogether false. She wrote that "never had one person been spoken to by so many Emperors, Kings, Princes and Princesses, as she had been." Mademoiselle Rachel, elate with very pardonable vanity, forgot that Talma, Madame Catalani and other artists of distinguished merit had been treated with equal consideration by many crowned heads; Talma was admitted to the presence of the greatest man that ever wore an imperial tiara, on a footing of familiar intercourse that testified the personal respect in which he was held, and which was far more flattering than a few passing compliments.

On the 14th Rachel performed in Potsdam, "Phèdre" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie." After the performance the King sent her by the Comte de Redern, his chamberlain, 20,000 frs., a very munificent present, especially as the large Opera-house at Berlin had been granted to her free of expence for six nights, and as she also had all the receipts. The Emperor of Russia sent, through his aid-de-camp, Count Orloffs, substantial tokens of his approbation, in the shape of two magnifi-

cent opals, surrounded with diamonds, which the recipient immediately estimated at their pecuniary worth, at 10,000 frs. Other private persons followed the Royal example, and presents and dinners marked each day of her stay.

From Potsdam she resumed her tour, passing through Frankfort, Wiesbaden, Metz, Colmar and Nancy, playing everywhere, though unable to stand when off the stage, and travelling from place to place in a bed fitted up in the carriage.

At Strasbourg she suffered another severe crisis, less alarming, however, than that which overtook her in Aix-la-Chapelle. The Princes of Prussia and the Grand Duchess Stephanie of Baden, having invited her to come to them, she conquered indisposition and fatigue in order to reap the advantages compliance would bring. A flattering reception, a magnificent bracelet and 10,000fr. in gold rewarded the effort. Dr. Varlez had advised she should go to St. Schlangenbad for the sake of the air there, and especially for the solitude and rest of which she was so much in need; she attempted to follow this advice, but not fancying the place, returned to Brussels, where she actually remained a whole fortnight without leaving the house. She was so much benefitted by this forced seclusion and the treatment she pursued that she



was enabled to return to Paris on the 18th of August. She immediately repaired to her villa at Montmorency, and there continued for some time the severe regimen prescribed, one of the chief points of which was the most absolute repose of mind and body. When the physician at last permitted her to play it was only such parts as *Emilie* in "Cinna," *Pauline* in "Polyeucte,"—the mildest doses of the Cornelian pharmacopeia. *Phèdre* and *Camille* were as strictly forbidden as coffee and spices.

The result of this treatment was the entire disappearance of all the fatal symptoms ; a new lease of life had been obtained and her physician has the consciousness of having prolonged this indefatigable *artiste's* existence five years.

In October she was reputed entirely cured, and prepared to undertake new creations. A rôle of "Aspasie," a tragedy in two acts by Samson, was studied by her, but never played ; "Rosemonde," which she undertook several years later, was even talked of then.

## CHAPTER VII.

1853.

"Lady Tartuffe"—Short Summer Excursion—An Obliging Manager—Engagement in Russia—Permission of the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française countersigned by M. Legouvé—A Diplomatic Letter—The Author and the Actress—Friendly Correspondence—"Medée" asked for; "Medée" written; "Medée" read; "Medée" revised and corrected; "Medée" approved, received, rehearsed; "Medée" put away for another day—Mademoiselle Rachel in St. Petersburg—State of Theatricals in Russia—A Witty Reply.

MADemoiselle RACHEL appeared in the part of Madame de Girardin's "Lady Tartuffe" on the 14th of February, 1853. This proved one of her best creations in comedy, though she herself never fancied the *rôle*.

The heroine is a *Mademoiselle de Blossac*, who, having reached the age of thirty without changing her name, follows the fashion of single ladies, who, in the summer of their existence, feel justified in adopting the title of "Madame." Ma-

dame, who leads a retired, respectable life, has met, while on some charitable excursion, the *Duke d'Estigny*, a Marshal of France and ex-ambassador, who, fascinated by the lady's apparent virtues, lodges her at once in his house and heart, that is, he begins by the offer of an apartment in his hotel, and ends by that of his hand. In the Marshal's hotel there are two other female inmates, his niece, the widowed *Countess de Clairmont* and her daughter *Jeanne*, fifteen years old, very pretty and endowed with a *naïveté*, a simplicity perfectly extraordinary in the present age. Between the widow and the aspirant to the Marshal's hand, heart and titles, there is from the very beginning a feud, which, though at first covert, subdued, and manifested only in asides and little skirmishes—a sort of war in the bush—*guerilla* encounters where the blows are none the less deadly because the arm is concealed—ends in an open fight, a pitched-battle, in which, though the cause of virtue is apparently triumphant, it is, in fact, hard to tell who has the best of it, and the leaders on both sides are damaged.

The old Marshal is a noble-hearted man, prone to place implicit belief in those who have his good opinion, pleased with what looks innocent, good and affectionate, and with no other failing, even if

that may be called one, than the inclination to relate incidents of his military and diplomatic career. The other personages are more or less useful accessories. There is a *Baron des Tourbières*, a sort of factotum of *Madame de Blossac*, who saves her interests in the beginning because she has loaned him 20,000frs., and who betrays her as soon as he has found one of her enemies willing to lend him that sum to repay her. This person, whose virtue, as he himself tells us, is a marketable commodity :

“O vertu, tu vaux de l’or !”

is certainly a far more odious creature than *Madame de Blossac*, besides which he is, in truth, quite a supernumerary in the play, being without importance, interest or avocation in it. He undertakes to advance her cause with the Marshal in the expectation that as *Madame la Maréchal* she will possess sufficient interest to procure him the post of *prefet* or that of *receveur général* but this busy person does nothing that she could not have accomplished without him, and in the meanwhile taunts and insults her with impunity because he has a secret of hers which may ruin her reputation.

The lover of *Jeanne*, young *Henri*, is of himself rather an insignificant personage ; but, as it hap-

pens, he was the intimate friend of a former lover of *Madame de Blossac's*. Five years ago, *Mademoiselle Blossac*, then on a visit to some English mansion, appointed a meeting in a pavilion with her then lover, who was supposed by the other members of the family to have gone out hunting. The pair was suddenly disturbed by the return of a real hunting party, and in danger of a discovery; the lover, to save the lady's reputation, leaps from the window, and in doing so springs the trigger of his gun; he is severely wounded, but his cold-hearted mistress, anxious to save her good name, heeds not his groans, and leaves him to die without aid. But a fortuitous circumstance reveals to one person at least her presence in the pavilion, where she had dropped her bouquet of heather. Since that fatal day she is yearly reminded of it by the *envoi*, on its anniversary, of a bouquet of heather sent by an unknown hand.

There is an excellent scene in the first act; unfortunately it is but too faithful a representation of that which is daily passing in society, where reputations are slain with the most inoffensive-looking weapons. Several members of a charitable society are assembled in *Madame de Blossac's salon* to discuss ways and means for the advancement of the interests of that society; the praise

of the hostess, her piety and charity, form the chief theme of conversation until the entrance of the *Countess de Clairmont* and her daughter. The Countess says at once she is not brought there by her own will, she comes deputed by her uncle to announce her daughter's marriage, and invite *Madame de Blossac* to join the family, who are that evening to celebrate the betrothals in the apartments of the Marshal. Here *Madame de Blossac* learns that the intended husband is *Henri de Renneville*, the man whom for five years she has secretly but passionately loved. The blow is terrible. She seeks to avert it by preventing the marriage, and resorts for that purpose to the usual feminine weapon, calumny. The scene is terribly true to the life.

The poisoned arrow has sped to its destination. *Monsieur de St. Yrieux*, one of the persons present, is a friend of the *Renneville* family; he thinks it a duty to warn them of the stain on *Jeanne's* character, and the result may be anticipated. This first act is very skilfully written; the dialogue is lively and witty, the characters are well drawn; the scene of the slander, so delicately insinuated, is particularly good.

The second and third acts are taken up with the sad consequences of the evil reports on poor

little *Jeanne*. The scene where the amours between *Madame de Blossac* and the Marshal are carried on, and in which the lady makes considerable progress towards the accomplishment of her aim—that of the open rupture between the Countess and her foe, during which the former exhibits a violence that contrasts with the mild dignity of her subtle antagonist, are well written, full of animation and interest. *Madame de Blossac* is warmly supported by the enamoured old Marshal, who closes his doors on his relatives and announces his marriage with their *victim*.

In the fourth act we have the vindication of *Jeanne*. But it does not suffice that she be proved pure in the eyes of the family circle, she must be so in the eyes of the public, and that is a far more difficult matter. *Henri*, who has recognised in the common foe, the *Madame de Blossac* whose egotism caused the death of his friend, and to whom he yearly sends the fatal reminder, lays a plot to dishonour her in the opinion of the world—not a very delicate proceeding on the part of this honest young man—but the tables are on the point of being turned upon him. He appoints a rendezvous at his own rooms, Hotel Wagram, to hear her promised com-

munication. The lady gives him the history of her long-concealed love for him, a love anterior to her intrigue with his friend ; his indifference maddened and drove her to endeavor, by flirting with another, to forget him. The narrative of this pure affection watching over him so many years with untiring solicitude, the fascination of the syren's voice, the magic charm of her eye, her frank avowal of former errors, her resolve to live another life, to be what she has hitherto affected only, and that for his sake, her disinterestedness—for she asks no return—all these have their effect, and cause the young man to reflect on the meanness of his own conduct in drawing a woman into an ambush. He is on the point of endeavoring to disentangle her from the net he himself had cast round her, when the Countess, the Marshal, and the *Baron des Tourbières*, whom he had concealed in an adjoining room to witness her defeat, break in and seek—two of them at least—to shame her.

The scene between *Henri* and *Madame de Blossac* is forced and unnatural, never would a clever woman, such as she is described, play such a part or run such a risk. But the closing scene is excellent ; the disgraced, betrayed, and foiled woman is so energetic, so true to herself, so



courageous amid the wreck of her long-cherished hopes, that it is hard to tell on which side the victory lies—the Marshall's last words :

“Poor woman, they are all against her !”

clearly evince that, over him, at least, *Madame de Blossac* will soon regain her empire. As for the main point sought by the conspirators against *Madame de Blossac*—the rehabilitation of *Jeanne* in the opinion of the public—we cannot see but what it is as far off as ever. *Jeanne* herself comes in all alone at the end of the play, exclaiming that she has been seeking her mother everywhere. Her presence was needed for the *tableau finale*, the joining of the lover's hands and blessing asked by *des Tourlières* !—but it does seem rather strange that she should leave her home unattended to seek her mother in *Henri's* apartment, Hotel Wagram !

It has been said, and with great truth, that a dramatic work is the greatest of all literary efforts. It is rare, indeed, that a play is written that combines every requisite. When the chief character is powerfully drawn, the other personages are weak and faulty. At times everything is sacrificed to a few scenes, rendered effective by the most improbable absurdities ; at others, brilliancy of style and superabundance of detail, like regal

garments thrown over a skeleton, merely serve to conceal the poverty of the idea, and the meagreness of the subject. For one or two successful and really good plays that now and then surprise the public, how innumerable are the failures.

Madame de Girardin, when she attempted tragedy, mistook her vocation, as "Judith" and "Cléopâtre," amply testified. But in "Lady Tarruffe," and "La Joie Fait Peur," she proved herself possessed of all the elements required to excel as a writer of comedy—of the real French comedy, the honor of inventing which reverts to La Chaussée.

If comedy be, indeed, the representation of the incidents and habits of familiar life, Molière himself overlooked a portion of its domain.

The poet calls human nature a "pendulum between a smile and a tear," and this is the true view that comedy must take; this was the view taken of it by La Chaussée—to have enlarged or cultivated the tract he opened is a glorious progress. At the present day we may well wonder that he who first embodied this appreciation of life should have been sneered at.

To the old detractors of La Chaussée Madame de Girardin opposed the triumphant reputation of her talent—an indisputable authority. She was

well aware that smiles and tears were the two poles of the human heart, at times brought together by a violent shock, and in "*La Joie Fait Peur*" she chose the subject most susceptible of being put upon the stage. We often hear the phrase of "to laugh until you cry," and there is no sadder species of insanity than that produced by extreme grief, and which betrays itself by violent fits of laughter. What was peculiarly her own, that which specially constituted Madame de Girardin's originality, was the skilful manner in which she effected a transition between those two extremes of feeling. She was well acquainted with the chords of the instrument, and succeeded in charming her readers or her audience without agitating them with too violent an emotion or giving too great a shock to the nervous system.

"*Lady Tartuffe*" was not, perhaps, as pleasing or as correct a work as "*La Joie Fait Peur*." The author was progressing in a department of dramatic art in which she would have reached perfection had her life been spared, and "*Lady Tartuffe*" was younger by a year than her more successful play. It betokens too hurried an execution, the plot is, perhaps, too intricate—there is much to be pruned—much that needed more delicate a finish—some of the speeches are too long,

and weary the audience, while the result, which has been laboriously sought among a crowd of incidents, proves unsatisfactory. Still, with all its faults, "Lady Tartuffe" is a type belonging to the authoress, and which, had she remodelled it would have proved an excellent comedy.

The worst fault of this play was its title, a title plainly indicating the intention of the author, but one as mistaken as it was bold, for it is in no way justified by the heroine. It is the flourish of trumpets announcing the entrance into the lists with Molière of a new candidate—an attempt to compete where competition was sure to entail failure—to imitate where any imitation must prove a caricature. Beaumarchais himself committed this mistake when he allowed the "New Tartuffe" to appear on the playbills, but even this daring genius disavowed his presumptuous pretensions and changed the title to that of the "Guilty Mother."

As for a *female Tartuffe*, thank heaven no such being ever existed. Molière's demon is a complete fiend, without a single redeeming point, and such a one could never find a lodging in a female heart. In the "Lady Tartuffe" of Madame de Girardin there are flashes of repentance, there is love. In the "Tartuffe" of Mo-

lière there could be neither. Repentance of itself washes away much sin, and where real love exists for a worthy object it regenerates the most erring nature—*Madame de Blossac* herself tell us so. *Tartuffe* never felt one moment's repentance, and the passion *Elimire* had excited in him deserves quite another name than that of love.

Mademoiselle Rachel made a conscientious study of this *rôle*, and though, as we have several times had occasion to remark, very inferior in comedy to what she was in her own *repertoire*, she played the character in the most creditable manner. This was the more meritorious, as she disliked the part exceedingly. The  *finesse*, the covert, subtle, subdued style required to play the female hypocrite were the opposites of the grand, bold, daring passions of tragedy, and could not be natural in Mademoiselle Rachel. What added greatly to the attraction was that Sanson, her professor, took the part of the old Marshal, and their perfect understanding, long habit of studying together and knowledge of each other's powers produced a result nearly amounting to perfection.

Still, though she played it well, and the play found favor with the public, the first night had

well nigh proved fatal to it. The audience, indeed, was so greatly disappointed that she wished to leave the theatre without speaking to Mademoiselle Rachel, under pretence of emotion. M. Regnier endeavored to persuade her to the contrary, but for some little time his efforts were vain :

“No,” exclaimed the vexed audience, “I cannot see her, she has played wretchedly.”

Finally, she allowed herself to be conducted to the *artiste's* dressing-room, and a few cold words were exchanged :

“You are not pleased,” said Rachel.

“N'importe, with you I am sure to succeed,” replied Madame de Girardin.

This year it was announced by Mademoiselle Rachel that she intended to devote the summer *congé* to repose, in order to be able with recruited strength and renewed energy to perform the duties of her autumnal and winter season. She intended this, it was said, as a refutation of the charges that had been brought against her by the management at the time of the lawsuit with the Théâtre Français.

It might be that she needed rest, for during the spring season, while she was acting *Lady Tartuffe* at the Théâtre Français, she was playing on the off

nights in the Departments. Thus, during the whole of March, she spent her days in the railways, and nights acting in Amiens, Orleans, Tours, going even as far as Nantes, and yet performing twice a-week in Paris! She called this resting because she was not permanently away from the capital. She was charmed by M. Arsenè Houssaye's compliance with her wishes regarding these excursions.

“C'est il gentil de M. Houssaye de me laisser faire cela, car il pourrait me le defendre!” she would exclaim, in the exuberance of her gratitude.

She did not, indeed, prolong her summer *congé* abroad over six weeks, during which she played in London, Brussels, Angers, Liège, and Saumur. Contrary to her expectations she had no houses. This was probably owing to her having visited these towns too often, and the provinces cannot bear repeated drains like capitals constantly recruited by foreign visitors. At all events Rachel, as was her wont when she wished to hide her disappointment, feigned sudden illness and returned to Paris, though she was expected in La Haye. It was then she announced her intention to repose during the remainder of the *congé*. How far she was sincere in her resolve to recruit for the benefit

of the Théâtre Français will appear by the use she made of her renewed strength. The summer was spent in active negotiations to obtain a most lucrative engagement that had long been anxiously desired by Mademoiselle Rachel, and which was finally obtained at the expense of the Théâtre Français.

It must be owned that though not over scrupulous on the means she used, the great *tragédienne* possessed a quality for which *artistes* are not often distinguished—she was an excellent woman of business. She never lost sight of what to her was the main point.

In the beginning of September it was rumoured that she was going to spend the winter in Russia. St. Petersburg had not yet paid the tribute of gold and laurels she had obtained in almost every European capital; Rachel reflected that she had no time to lose if she wished to levy her tax. The Eastern question was becoming so complicated that a war was inevitable, and hostilities were expected to break out in the spring. If she delayed, the roubles were lost to her. All the wires of dramatic diplomacy were set to work; the Russian Court was willing to pass the winter as agreeably as possible previous to commencing a campaign of which it entertained such brilliant



anticipations, and an engagement for six months was offered to Mademoiselle Rachel, who was permitted by the courtesy of the French Government to accept it.

This important news was communicated in the following terms to M. Ernest Legouvé one of the authors of "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*," by Madame de Saigneville, a friend of the *tragédienne*, and her secretary whenever a difficult negotiation was to be carried through :

"October 5th.

"YOU have probably learned, sir, by the newspapers, the incredible munificence of the engagement proposed to our Rachel in the name of the Emperor of Russia. Government has thought fit to permit the great *artiste* to earn in six months a fortune. Rachel will be back here on the 15th of May (1854); she will, on her arrival, be quite perfect in "*Medea*," and the tragedy will be acted immediately. I send you herewith her letter properly dated. She commissioned me to forward it as a proof of her good intentions.

"I need not say how devotedly I am yours,

"L. J. DE SAIGNEVILLE."

The above letter was corroborated by one from Mademoiselle Rachel herself, written in the coaxing, insinuating tone women command so readily when they wish to obtain anything.

“DEAR M. LEGOUVE,

“BRILLIANT offers have long been made to induce me to spend a winter in Russia. These I have repeatedly refused, alleging my duties at the Théâtre Français and the fear of disobliging my comrades. But the engagement now offered is really so extraordinarily advantageous that I have endeavored to obtain the very great favor of taking this winter the six months' *congé* I was to have next summer. The Emperor, the Minister of State and the Comédie Français have granted me leave to visit that northern nation. I set out with sufficient courage, and I assure you it is needed to brave the approaching season, which threatens to be severe. Do not, dear sir, increase my grief (which is great) by bearing me any ill will. I shall keep “Medea.” I would greatly wish to find her on my return the spotless maiden she now is; but whatever happens to her my love is such I will willingly receive her back from the arms she may have wandered into.

“You have sometimes professed yourself my

friend—here, now, is an excellent opportunity of proving yourself one. I hope on my return to find your friendship unaltered.

“As for me, I am ever your devoted,

“RACHEL.

“Paris, October 4th, 1853.”

The reader who has forgotten, or perhaps heard of, the suit at law between M. Legouvé and Mademoiselle Rachel towards the close of the year 1854, will perhaps question why the proud *Roxane*, the fierce *Hermione*, should write so coaxingly to M. Legouvé, and why she, who had a pass signed by the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française, deemed it requisite that it should be countersigned by that gentleman. A few words will explain her anxiety on this point, and throw some preliminary light on the subsequent quarrel.

M. Legouvé, the son of a poet, a poet himself of some reputation, and one of the authors of “*Adrienne Lecouvreur*,” had become the friend of Mademoiselle Rachel under the following circumstances. *Adrienne* was first offered to Mademoiselle Rachel, who, after learning and rehearsing the part, suddenly took it into her head that it

was quite unsuited to her. This caprice, for we have already seen that she had neither taste nor discernment in dramatic literature, offended M. Scribe exceedingly, and he gave the charming *rôle* to Mademoiselle Rose Cheri. The spirit of rivalry did what no entreaties or the promptings of good sense could have obtained. Rachel was as eager to have the part when it was another's as she had been obstinate in returning it when it was hers. But M. Scribe was also a sovereign power in theatrical affairs, he was in his turn obdurate, and it was only through the kindly intervention of his co-author, M. Legouvé, that the coveted part went back to its original destination.

The success of the play having taught Mademoiselle Rachel how much she was indebted to him who had restored it to her, became the foundation of the warmest friendship between them. The actress, with that passionate enthusiasm of heart and head which is too often the sole guide of the sex, could neither see nor hear, save through her *cher auteur*. She would have wished to play no works but his, and until he could write new ones for her she took up his old ones.

Mademoiselle Mars had some years before created with the fullest success the *rôle* of *Louise*

*de Lignerolles.* We have seen that Mademoiselle Rachel, who ought to have been taught wisdom by former failures, undertook once more to prove her right of succession to the light sceptre so gracefully held by the great *comédienne*; but the attempt was extremely unfortunate. That her good will was not lacking is fully shown by the following lines, written on the fly-leaf of a copy of "Talma's Memoirs" sent to M. Legouv   on the 6th of January, 1852.

"I mean to spend my nights learning 'Louise de Lignerolles,' with which I am exceedingly charmed. See M. Houssaye as soon as possible, that the work may be immediately revived. You may rely on my zeal, my devotion, and somewhat, too, on my ability. I send you a book, the perusal of which will, I think, interest you. You have promised me a play for 1853; I rely on having it, mind.

"RACHEL."

Monsieur Legouv   was justified in considering so positive an invitation, made, as it were, in the presence of the shade of Talma, as a formal command, binding on both sides. He set to work, choosing "Medea" as his subject.

The subject was not a new one, but neither

had his predecessors, who wrote expressly for Mademoiselle Rachel, selected very modern themes. The "Lucrece" of M. Ponsard and the "Virginie" of M. Latour de St. Ybars, the two tragedies of contemporaries in which she had been most happy, were both based on incidents borrowed from the early legends of the Roman Republic. The character of *Medea* was, perhaps, more appropriate than either of the former to bring into bold relief the peculiar qualities and style of the actress. She had, moreover, expressed a wish that the play should be short and that all the interest should be concentrated in her part. The tragedy was accordingly in three acts only, during which the fierce Princess was almost constantly on the stage. In these two points, at least, Mademoiselle Rachel's views were fully carried out.

"Medée" was finished in April of that year (1852) and Mademoiselle Rachel, who had been forthwith apprised of the fact, promptly replied to the communication by the following grateful and friendly letter:

"MON CHER AUTEUR,

"I am exceedingly desirous of hearing your new work. I am yet rather ailing, not having

quite recovered from an indisposition I suffered from in Belgium last month : but having had the courage to submit to the most absolute inaction during all this month. I am inclined to think there is still life in me, and especially strength enough to be indebted to you for new triumphs. I am at present residing at Montmorency, where, if you please, I will hear the play that is to be our next winter's success. The 8th of September would suit me well ; the hour I leave to you, as I am always at home. I would wish the part to be a brilliant one, but not fatiguing, since, unfortunately, I shall not for some months be able to play my grand *repertoire*, that is, " Phèdre," " Horaces," " Louise de Lignorelles," " Marie Stuart," " Andromaque," &c., &c. That shews you I am not very strong yet. I am in hopes the reading of your play will accelerate my recovery. I shall owe you much ; rely on it then that I will be doubly grateful.

" RACHEL.

" Montmorency, August 27th."

The private reading alluded to in the above letter was followed by the official one before the *comité de lecture* of the theatre, and it was received conditionally—that is, there were six white and

six red balls. The explanation of this was that two acts were unanimously received, and one on condition of certain alterations, to which the author consented. The third act having been remoulded, the play was submitted to an ordeal considered by authors as almost equivalent to a public performance—it was read in the presence of an audience consisting of the *élite* of literature and of society. Among the men of the world, of letters, and of that of fashion, assembled in Mademoiselle Rachel's *salon* were Messrs. Charton, H. Martin, J. Janin, Briffault, Rolle, de Noailles, Berlioz, &c., by whom “*Medée*” was received with great applause, the hostess herself manifesting the most enthusiastic admiration.

This time the admission by the *comité de lecture* of the theatre was unanimous and unconditional, and Mademoiselle Rachel was rehearsing her part diligently, when, in September of 1853, the voyage to Russia was resolved upon.

It is evident that it was rather a delicate matter to propose to an author, who had been labouring two years for her and at her request, the adjournment of all his hopes at the moment they were about to be realised. Hence the coaxing tone of the letters of Mademoiselle Rachel and her secretary, Mademoiselle de Saigneville.



M. Legouvé, however, did not justify the charge made against authors belonging to the genus irritable; he consented with a good grace to the proposed delay; and, free from all obstacles, Mademoiselle Rachel set out for Russia in the month of October of this year.

A few words on the present state of theatricals in the capital of Russia will be a sufficient protest against the assertions of those who deem it no difficult matter to earn distinction in what they imagine to be a city where dramatic art is still in its infancy.

St. Petersburg possesses four theatres and six theatrical companies.

The houses are:

The Grand Théâtre, where the Italian Opera and ballets are given.

The Russian theatre, or Théâtre Alexandre, for the performance of works in the national language —by a singular anomaly this house is the one that attracts the fewest spectators.

The French theatre or Théâtre Mickaelski, exclusively appropriated to French companies.

The Théâtre Cirque, so called from its having been originally built for the performances of the Imperial Equestrian Company. At present the

Russian Opera Company and German Dramatic Company perform there alternately.

The Grand Théâtre and the Théâtre Français are the best patronised in St. Petersburg. The Court, the citizens, and the numerous French inhabitants are supporters of these two houses. The German performances at the Théâtre du Cirque attract only the German residents. As to the Russian dramatic and operatic performances, they are left entirely to the lower classes, who do not exhibit any very ardent patriotism in their support. The Russians seem to feel already that to take their place worthily in the ranks of civilised nations, they must renounce in an artistic and literary sense, the use of their language.

The two Russian theatres are in their infancy, but not in such infancy as was that of Western theatricals when they were compelled to struggle against barbarism, and to seek their models in the dust of ages and in the scattered fragments of forgotten antiquity. The pieces brought out in those theatres gave evidence of the contemporary education their authors have received and of the atmosphere in which they have dwelt. There is more than one Russian dramatic work on a level with the present century, and which, translated into French or English, would take its place among those

most in vogue in London or Paris. The same may be said of the actors. They are not grossly ignorant companions of Thespis, fit only to perform in silly shows for the amusement of spectators neither wiser or more refined than themselves. They have been formed in the schools of their French, German and Italian comrades, and have been early initiated in all the rules of art, in all the mysteries of the profession. There are several among them who can bear comparison with the most celebrated of the members of the French troop.

Such was the dramatic world in which Mademoiselle Rachel made her appearance in St. Petersburg.

The reception of the *tragédienne* in St. Petersburg was not only most gratifying to her vanity, but also most encouraging as to her success. Strange to say, however, no experience or long practice, no confidence in the favorable disposition towards her of the audience could make her conquer the timidity with which she is seized when about to appear either in a new part or before a new public. For some days before the ordeal she was always in a state of great nervous excitement, fidgetty, irritable and fault-finding to the last degree. This state of mind is so insepa-

rable to a *débüt* that the event is as much dreaded by those about her as by herself; poor Rose, her faithful maid, is most especially delighted when the event is over and her mistress has again recovered her usual placidity of temper. When she comes on the stage on these occasions her hands are icy cold, the drops of perspiration cover her brow, her voice is husky, her limbs are so tremulous she can scarcely stand. This emotion—which, in one so skilled and practised to appear before the footlights is extraordinary, is reproduced, more or less violently, every time she plays in a character which the public has not seen her in, though she may have acted it with applause scores of times elsewhere.

When, therefore, she appeared before the Court of St. Petersburg, in “*Phèdre*,” she did not justify her reputation on the first night. It was not encouragement that was lacking, and it was given, too, most liberally, at most unexpected moments. For instance, when *Phèdre* utters the passage ending with these lines:

“Détestable flatteurs présent le plus funeste,

Que puisse faire aux rois le colère celeste!”

the signal for loud applause came from the imperial box, and was too enthusiastic and prolonged for the intention to be mistaken. It was

called forth as much by the allusion the lines contained as by the talent of the actress who uttered them.

In "Lady Tartuffe" the emotion of *Mademoiselle Rachel* was such that it was thought by those on the stage and behind the scenes she would not be able to proceed with the part. In the scene of the fifth act, when *Henri* reveals himself by throwing the bouquet of heather to her whom he accuses of causing his friend's death, it was fortunate that the part required a show of emotion, which this time was not feigned. It was in vain the prompter gave her the cue; she had completely lost her memory, and could only whisper to him who played *Henri*:

"Oh, I cannot—cannot go on!" ("Je n'en puis plus.")

The nature of the passage giving her time to recover, she finally shook off the feeling.

The French company remained at the *Mikaëlski* theatre fourteen weeks, during which time *Rachel* played every other day. The favorite play with the Russian public appeared to be "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*," and it was accordingly given oftener than any other.

The imperial approbation showed itself in a tangible form as well as in empty compliments

and evanescent applause. The *tragédienne* was presented by the Empress with a pelisse of the most costly furs in the world, and by the munificent Nicholas with a diamond and ruby corsage ornament of great value. Raphael Felix had his share of the spoils in the shape of a magnificent ring. There was an idle report among the actors that a handsome sum had been sent to be distributed among the other members of the company, but Raphael undeceived them; the money had been sent as the price of the boxes taken by the Court.

From St. Petersburg Rachel went to Moscow, where she played six weeks. The company was to have played in Warsaw, but counter-orders were given by the Government.

The success of Mademoiselle Rachel was not alone due to her as an actress, she made innumerable conquests over the hearts of the young boyards, and the gallant officers, who joyously anticipated nothing less than a second invasion of France, appeared proud to wear the chains of her celebrated daughter. Among the numerous unauthenticated anecdotes that circulated with regard to her sayings and doings during her stay in the Czar's domains, we venture to present the following to our readers, by many of whom it may

have already been seen, as it has appeared in print. We give it, not on account of its being more worthy of belief, but because, if true, it does credit to Rachel—if not, she had ready wit enough to have made the reply, though her *patriotism* would never have suggested it.

A dinner had been offered to the French Melpomene, and the young military guests were speaking of the possibility that the sword might be called to sever the Gordian knot that diplomacy seemed to despair of ever loosening.

“We shall not bid you adieu, but *au revoir*, mademoiselle,” quoth one of the gay sons of Mars to the *tragédienne*; “we hope soon to applaud you in the capital of France, and to drink your health in its excellent wines.”

“Nay, messieurs,” replied she, “France will not be rich enough to afford champagne to all her prisoners.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

1854.

Return from Russia—Prudence *versus* Patriotism—M. Legouvé Loses Patience—A Declaration of War before the Civil Tribunal—Soft Words—M. Legouvé Appeased—The Spoiled Pet and the Public—Another Quarrel patched up—Mademoiselle Rachel in the Classic *Repertoire* at the Close of Her Career—"Phèdre"—"Camille"—A *Souvenir* of the Past.

It was said that the harvest Mademoiselle Rachel reaped in Russia amounted to 300,000frs. for her own share, and that Raphael's modest gains, as manager of the company, gave a total of 100,000frs. A very handsome reward for making what, under the circumstances, might be considered a pleasure trip!

But the hour had arrived when Russian hearts were to be left to break, or seek comfort elsewhere. As to that of the fortunate daughter of Israel, it found satisfactory compensation in the roubles she bore away; she might say with truth: "C'est autant de prisur l'ennemi!"



Political events marched on apace, and left no time to deliberate; the war was imminent. It was said that the Czar had one moment entertained the idea of detaining Mademoiselle Rachel as a willing hostess, but that she had refused to remain. In fact there was no longer any inducement. If she stayed after the close of her engagement she had to do so on her own account, and the chances were against her in that case. The majority of the fashionable aristocracy having a knowledge of the language could appreciate her acting, but many would be called away to join the army. Of the gentry, some went to see her merely because it was the fashion to do so, and, the novelty once over, never cared to go again. It was not in St. Petersburg as in Paris, where the *bourgeoisie* are among the staunch supporters of the stage and even the lower class delight in theatricals and contribute gladly their quota to support them. The Russian tradespeople could find no charms in Racine and Corneille, and the inferior ranks were not to be counted at all.

All these considerations aroused the dormant patriotism of the *tragédienne*, and she hurried home when she could get nothing by staying any longer. She was, perhaps, the last Frenchwoman that crossed the frontier.

During her stay in the Czar's dominions Mademoiselle Rachel had continually heard her Russian friends boast of what they should, could, and would do. The invasion of 1814 and 1815 were to find their parallels in 1854. These vain braggings probably had their effect on the prudent actress, and made her resolve to quit, for a time, a country that was likely to be impoverished, if not ruined, by the invader—she might in the meanwhile seek in America another Eldorado. Time was money, and she could not lose hers.

She did not even await her arrival in Paris to carry out her plans, but began their execution before she left Russia.

That the American excursion was planned at that time there is every reason to believe. Why else should Rachel have thought fit immediately on her arrival in France to repay the courtesy and kindness with which the Emperor, the Minister of State, and the Comédie Française had permitted her to visit that northern nation, by sending in her resignation? Why else should she have deputed her mother to signify to M. Legouvé that “decidedly she would not play *Medée*,” the *Medée* which Mademoiselle de Saigneville had announced “should be played immediately on her return from Russia,” and which Mademoiselle

Rachel was so afraid she would not find "the same pure maiden," though her love was such she was "willing to take her from the arms she might have strayed into."

We know not how the French Government received the announcement of the resignation, but the revelations of the Palais de Justice have placed before us the rather sharp answer returned by M. Legouvé to the intimation forwarded to him of Mademoiselle Rachel's resolutions with regard to "Medée."

"DEAR LADY," wrote the poet, "I have had the honor to see madame, your mother; she communicated to me the contents of your letter. I replied as I reply to you now—that it is impossible you should not play 'Medée.' Of this I will easily convince you on your return. I shall be delighted to have afforded you the opportunity of a new triumph, even a little against your will.

"Yours, very truly,

"E. LEGOUVÉ."

This firm but courteous letter met Mademoiselle Rachel in Warsaw on her way back. Her reply, dated March 14th, was as follows:

“MY DEAR M. LEGOUVE,

“YOUR letter reached me on my arrival in Warsaw; I hasten to answer it, for I would not be the cause of delaying any longer the success that awaits ‘*Medée*’ at the Théâtre Français.

“My resignation is most serious; consequently I have but six months to give to the Théâtre Français. I wish in that time to play all my classic *repertoire*; this I could not do if I undertook a new creation at present. I will even confess that I ought not to create a new *rôle* when I am on the eve of quitting the French stage. The conviction that the press would not support me, fear would paralyse my faculties, and it is not at the close of my career in the rue de Richelieu that I would like to risk seventeen years of success in Paris.

“Pray believe, dear M. Legouvé, that I am truly grieved to find I must give up the playing of ‘*Medée*.’

“Very much your friend,

“RACHEL.”

No sort of doubt could remain, and M. Legouvé—the courteous, peace-seeking M. Legouvé—was obliged to seek the redress the law alone could give him. Mademoiselle Rachel

reached Paris on the 27th of March; on the 30th she was legally notified to play *Medée*. This first step having been taken no notice of, a petition to be allowed to summon the rebellious actress herself, was presented on the 1st of April to the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine, and forthwith granted.

Mademoiselle Rachel knew well with whom she had to deal, and, convinced that these fierce demonstrations emanated not from him but from his lawyer, she wrote him a letter that would have disarmed a man of sterner mould than the son of the soft-hearted author of "*De Mérite des Femmes*."

"I am about to start for the Pyrenees to meet my sister Rebecca, who is there extremely ill, to take one of my children there, whose state of health alarms me greatly, and to seek myself the rest which has been prescribed to me. I leave here on account of all these very strong motives, of which you are not ignorant, but I cannot absent myself from Paris without coming to some decision on the subject of the lawsuit you have commenced against me, you whom I called, and whom I still call, my dear Monsieur Legouv  .

"I am only here, on my way through Paris, a prey to the most harrowing anxiety, and I receive, one after the other, two horrid bits of stamped paper instead of the interview of ten minutes which, as you wrote to me in Warsaw, was to set matters right between us, and which certainly would have done so had you consulted your memory instead of the retailers of chicanery.

"Must I imitate you? I ask myself this question between two half-packed trunks, but I hesitate but a second. No, I will not play *Medée* under judicial compulsion, with the risk, if the guilty, the abominable 'Medée,' does not meet with the success the author expects, of hearing myself accused by his friends as the cause. People of the world and of the press will not fail to say that, if 'Medée' did not succeed it was the fault of Mademoiselle Rachel, who retaliated by opposing ill-will to compulsion, and revenged herself on the author by killing the piece.

"*Medée* may murder her children, she may even poison her worthy father-in-law; I cannot do the same, even if I would.

"The public must not be taken for an accomplice to avenge theatrical quarrels when one bears such a name as mine, and when one has for it the respect I have.

“Consequently, my dear M. Legouvé, I will show in this petty war more moderation than you, although the epoch when I shall irrevocably cease to belong to the Théâtre Français is very nigh; although I can now give but a very few performances, which, out of gratitude, must be from my classic *repertoire*, when everything proves that I shall not have time in case of possible failure to seek to retrieve it, I will not have a lawsuit. You will have me play *Medée* under these circumstances? Well, I will do so! I will even endeavor to forget your summonses, your stamped paper, messages and *huissiers*’ visit. I will forget all my griefs, and only remember the success for which we have been reciprocally indebted to each other, and the friendship you have been so ready to break.

“At the expiration of my *congé* I will undertake *Medée*. You have merit enough to afford to be modest, but you are certainly too modest when you deem me indispensable to your work.

“Meanwhile, until I can call myself your devoted *Medée*, I still sign myself,

“Your entirely devoted,

“RACHEL.

“Paris, April 9th, 1854.”

This time the motives alleged by Mademoiselle Rachel for her absence and for the delay she again begged were but too well founded. The state of Rebecca's health was most alarming. M. Legouvé is a poet, but above all he is a man hereditarily devoted to the worship and companionship of woman. The most sensitive chords of his heart had been artfully touched—he was disarmed—the suit was not prosecuted; he waited.

The *congé*, however, at length expired, and Mademoiselle Rachel made her re-appearance in “*Phèdre*,” on the 30th of May.

Never, perhaps, had the absence of that personal sympathy which had always been lacking between Mademoiselle Rachel and the *parterre* of the Théâtre Français been manifested so plainly as on the evening of this *rentrée*. Many were the sins accumulated on that head. The remembrance of her conduct towards the committee of the theatre and the legal debates to which it had given rise were fresh in every mind. The Comédie Française is a sort of holy ark with the Parisians. But that which had added gall to the cup was her subsequent anti-patriotic *fugue* to Russia—a country that had left such painful *souvenirs* in the capital, *souvenirs* that had then not as yet been effaced by the glorious exploits of the French army in the



Crimea—a country that boasted of renewing the days of shame and humiliation of 1814! On the eve of a bloody war, Rachel had hastened to contribute her talent to the entertainment of the enemy. The reception of the capricious, *nomade*, grasping renegade, was in accordance with the thoughts that filled every mind. It was silent, cold as the tomb; every brow was stern, every eye severe.

But the more implacable and resolute seemed the audience in its indignation, the more determined was the actress to conquer and bring it back, if not to love, at least, to passionate admiration. And she succeeded, for, we have already said it, with her, will was power.

Now that this, the greatest French tragic actress that has appeared for many years, and who, perhaps, will have no worthy successor for several generations, is in all likelihood really excluded for ever from that stage she so frequently threatened to forsake, a few words on the manner in which she performed at the close of her career the plays of her classic *repertoire*, are due to her.\*

\* The reader will bear in mind that the greater portion of this work was written before the death of Mademoiselle Rachel.

When Mademoiselle Rachel first won the enthusiastic admiration of the public, she was immediately called *la grande tragédienne*. Yet, at that time, she only gave promise of what she would be; the signs were indeed extraordinary, and she fully justified afterwards the expectations she had raised and the title she had obtained. But it was not at once that, in every *rôle*, she deserved the extravagant encomiums lavished upon her first steps; there were some in which only transient rays pierced at intervals through the darkness. It was not until some years had elapsed that the radiant sun burst forth in all its splendor.

The one in which her excellence was most evidently progressive was "Phèdre." It was not until her return from Russia, when her talent was in its maturity, that she fully realised this superhuman conception of the poet.

It was remarked that she had brought back from her distant excursion the art she either had not before, or had never deemed necessary—the art of pantomime. When, in France, Rachel had uttered in her deep, clear, sonorous tones the poetry of Corneille and Racine, the poets were sufficient in themselves; they were at home and loved and appreciated; the public knew the text and needed no paraphrase. But the priestess had

borne her gods into an unknown region, established their altars in an unconsecrated temple, amid unbelieving nations; the pythoness spoke a strange tongue; the melody of those eloquent oracles fell into sealed ears, and the human passions to which she gave a voice were mute to those deaf spectators. Something that appealed to the eye was wanting there, and the intelligent interpreter supplied it. And when she brought back this new faculty, even those who had never found it lacking exulted in the acquisition, and the detractors, who would formerly only acknowledge she was a splendid reader dared no longer thus qualify their praise.

The character played was now not in the voice and look only of the actress, but in her whole being. The voice of the actor has but a limited part to play in the event. When he ceases to speak the interest is transferred to the next speaker, and so on from one to the other of the *dramatis personæ*. With Rachel the case stood wholly different. She concentrated the tragedy on herself. She embodied the event, began and developed it—foreshadowed the end. She incarnated the character, the action. When she appeared as *Phèdre*, bending under the weight of the diadem that burned that brow like a

fiery circle, shrinking from the veils that enrobed her, she was the type of suffering, the living image of Destiny's victim; her curse and her crime are present throughout the play.

It was more especially in the death scene that Rachel typified with mute, thrilling eloquence, the Greek victim. The agony, so calm, so proud, so dignified, is truly that of the God-descended queen, who disdains to betray the mortal pangs that rack her terrestrial nature. Pantomime is not only almost impossible to describe, but is also one of the most difficult things to imitate. It might perhaps be very dangerous for anyone else to attempt the reproduction of gestures unless they conveyed as vividly the terrific idea.

It was not till after fifteen years had elapsed that Rachel rose to *Phèdre* and presented that extraordinary combination of pagan passion and Christian remorse, where Euripides appears to have inspired Racine, and to which an Athenian audience of his day would have listened with as great delight and surprise as the enthusiastic Parisians of the nineteenth century.

It need scarcely be added that the fascinating actress cemented anew her empire and was recalled with deafening applause.

On the 6th of June, the celebration of the anniversary of Corneille's birthday, the inauguration of which was due to Mademoiselle Rachel, took place at the Théâtre Français. The tragedy was "Les Horaces." Between the acts the *tragédiennne* recited a poem in honor of Corneille, "La Muse Historique," by M. Theodore de Bauville. Language has been exhausted to convey an idea of Rachel's *Camille*. Nothing has been left unsaid. Whatever might be the rank assigned by the author to his personages, the actress took the first for hers. Voltaire considered the end of the fourth act as an episode; with Mademoiselle Rachel it was a second play, so new, so eloquent, so appalling, that it effaced all remembrance of the first, and when she had finished all seemed to end with her, for the public thought neither of the old father nor of the youthful victor, nor of *Sabine*, nor of *Emile*, still less of *Valère*, or of the salvation of Rome too cheaply purchased with the grief and desolation of a single house.

In Corneille, the episode begins with the monologue of *Camille*. With Mademoiselle Rachel, the play begins with the first scene of the fourth act. And when, too, *Valère* relates the combat that ends with her lover's death, the mute, but terrifically eloquent by-play of the actress en-

grossed all the attention of the public. No one thought of the old man who had lost his two brave sons, but gained eternal honor by the third ; all the tragedy was in the brow, the sinking form of *Camille*.

That which constituted the superiority of Rachel, was the unique, the superlative grace that was in every motion, a grace that no violence of passion could annul, this grace mingling with the terror she so readily conveyed to every heart, acted like a magical charm that subdued and ravished all who saw her, yet was inexplicable to the very ones who acknowledged its influence.

She risked everything and seemed to risk nothing. She dared more than the author, she went beyond him in the reality, yet she had so completely the art of assimilating what she did to the tragedy itself, that she and it were identified. She dallied with the agonies of the flesh. She imitated to perfection the work of physical destruction, and yet the body, the obedient instrument of her will, which reproduced with such frightful truth the shivering, the convulsive throes of approaching death, transformed that horror into an ideal of grace. Everyone has witnessed the scene, there is nothing new, and yet the effect is as powerful the last as the first time ; there was a

something there that could neither weaken nor fall.

With Mademoiselle Rachel there was no counting of time, of lines, of verses ; the real tragedy was in her heart, and the spectator followed its action on her brow, in her motions ; according to her inspiration she gave you at times a whole scene in a line, in a word. Her deepest dejection, her weakness, were full of might—however crushed she appeared by the blow, you felt instinctively she would pass suddenly from that prostration to the extreme of fury ; that the violence of the passion would outstep all limits, that amid this wild rage, this apparently ungovernable outbreak, there was a strong will curbing and subduing it all—there was inspiration guided by study, passionate ardor restrained by cool judgment

This part always remained a favorite one with the *tragédienne*. Wherever she went she made her *débüt* in it on every stage. It was in this *rôle* that she appeared on the most important day of her life—that which decided her fate—that on which the doors of the temple were first opened to admit its future priestess—that on which she was to set foot for the first time on the stage that was to see her so triumphant. .

For the following account of the scene we have the authority of Monsieur Janin :—

It was in the summer of 1838; some half a dozen persons had assembled in the darkened theatre, glad to escape the blaze of the noon-day sun, but anxious to get through the wearisome task before them—that of hearing, for the hundredth time, perhaps, the finest poetry in the French language marred by the wretched delivery of a new claimant of the *three débûts* granted to those deemed worthy: the judges were to decide whether the public should be called to endure the *ennui* they had themselves tested.

The appearance of the neophyte was not prepossessing. Scant, mean apparel, a pale face and meagre figure, betokened a childhood spent amid the want and privations attendant on poverty, and gave the idea that at that very moment the girl might be suffering from hunger. What could be hoped from such a source? Who would have ventured to prophecy that the shadow before them was the reality and the life—the resurrection of art—that the gruff but weak voice was to say to the slumbering poets: arise and follow me! The assembled judges were there as a matter of form, to get through an indispensable task—not from any conviction of its use, for they



had ceased to believe in the return of the tragic muse since she had fled, bearing in the folds of her tunic her last representatives: Talma and Duchesnois.

The girl came forward, but, contrary to all expectations, she did not, with frantic gestures, bawling voice, and time-consecrated emphasis, give the :

“Rome ! l’unique objet ! de mon ressentiment !”

with eyes that suddenly gleamed like living coals in their dark orbits ; she uttered in a low, deep, firm tone, as though she spoke to herself, words that really doomed to destruction the proud city :

“Rome l’unique objet de mon ressentiment.”

It was evident this was no mere transitory anger, no burst of evanescent fury. There was a depth of passion, of concentrated, earnest, implacable resentment, the more fearful that it was not violently demonstrative ; indeed there was hardly a gesture ; but, as she proceeded in those terrific anathemas, the impression on the hearers was that made by the approaching storm—at first low and distant, but coming nearer and nearer at every fearful peal, and finally bursting over their heads, scattering ruin and destruction. Each of

the astonished judges looked at his neighbor's face to read his thoughts. The wisest deemed the thing accidental, a freak of chance. None there saw the signs of a revolution. All agreed to give the girl the solicited permission to play thrice on their stage. After which they went to dinner and thought no more about it.

## CHAPTER IX.

1854.

The First Real Affliction—Death of Rebecca Felix—The Rosary—The “Pardon”—Miss Smithson—Mademoiselle Sontag—A Warning—A Letter from M. Legouvé—Letters from Mademoiselle Rachel and her Secretary—Mademoiselle Rachel condemned to play “*Medée*”—Mademoiselle Rachel doesn’t play “*Medée*”—“*Rosemonde*”—Another Miscalculation.

AMID these continual triumphs, obtained, as it were, against the will of the very ones who contributed their meed of applause, a great grief, the first real one that had ever been felt by the *tragedienne* during the course of her feted and brilliant career, interrupted this happy life, this long summer’s day. Her favorite sister, Rebecca, died.

Rebecca Felix, when in her fifteenth year, in 1843, made her *débüt* in *Chimène*. She continued some time to act in tragedy, but good sense, personified in the person of her father, soon saw an

imminent danger in her following in the footsteps of a sister who had already taken the first place in that branch of dramatic art. The lesser light could not fail to be lost in the stronger rays of the greater luminary. Rebecca could at best be but a faint copy of her sister. Her vocation, was, therefore, very judiciously altered, and she entered the easier walks of the drama and of comedy. Her last and best effort was in "*Made-moiselle de Belle-Isle*." But a lung complaint that had succeeded a typhus fever cut short a career which, if it did not promise to be as brilliant as that of her sister, gave hope of some distinction.

Rebecca was—and deservedly so—the favorite sister of the *tragédienne*. We have seen, by her letter to M. Legouvé, that, on her return from Russia she had hastened to visit the dear sufferer then in the Pyrenees, where she was waiting to take the Eaux Bonnes. When her *congé* expired she was compelled to resume her duties at the Théâtre Français. She continued, notwithstanding, her watchful care over her sister, and, while acting twice a-week, managed to perform the journey to and fro thrice in as many weeks.

An incident occurred during one of these flying trips which proves not only the excitable nature

of Rachel, but also that the visit to the Vatican had made a more permanent impression than was supposed.

The disease, according to the wont of that treacherous malady, had appeared to take a favorable turn; the alarming symptoms had momentarily vanished, the patient was suddenly relieved. Mademoiselle Rachel, who had been a constant attendant for some days, took the opportunity to go and see Sarah, who was confined by some temporary indisposition to her own lodgings. Several friends were assembled in the room, and, exhilarated by the good news she had brought and the hopes all hastened to build on the change, Mademoiselle Rachel began to chat and laugh quite merrily. In the midst of this exuberant gaiety her maid broke into the room in a state of great excitement; a fit had come on, the patient was in much danger, the physician desired Mademoiselle Rachel's immediate presence. Rising with the bound of a wounded tigress, the *tragédienne* seemed to seek, bewildered, some cause for the blow that fell thus unexpectedly. Her eye lighted on a rosary blessed by the Pope and which she had worn round her arm as a bracelet ever since her visit to Rome. Without, perhaps, accounting to herself for the belief, she had attached some

talismanic virtue to the beads. Now, however, in the height of her rage and disappointment she tore them from her wrist, and dashing them to the ground, exclaimed :

“ Oh ! fatal gift ! 'tis thou hast entailed this curse upon me ! ”

With these words she sprang out of the room, leaving every one in mute astonishment at her frantic action.

On the 23rd of June, four sisters and a mother brought back to the father's house in Paris the body of the lamented lost one. On the day of the burial a scene took place of the most moving description, and in which the different tempers of two of the survivors were brought to light very forcibly.

There is a rite among the Jews denominated the *Pardon*. Before the body of a deceased child of Israel is carried out to be buried, the relatives, one after the other, go up to it, and calling out the name several times, invoke forgiveness for any ill examples or ill treatment they may have been guilty of towards the deceased when living, ending with the repetition three times of the word pardon ! pardon ! pardon ! When it came to Sarah's turn, the consciousness of her manifold errors came over her with terrible force, and, joined to the horror

and grief of the moment, so overpowered that sensitive, excitable, passionate nature, that, falling prostrate on the ground, she shrieked the name of the dead one in heart-rending tones, calling with sobs and tears for forgiveness.

There were two strangers present, two Christians, the actor Laferrière, and a lady. When Sarah was raised and taken out, the mother said hurriedly to the Christians :

"It is Rachel's turn now ; for God's sake, go ; do not look at her, do not stop."

"No," added young Dinah, "don't say that. let Rachel think you watch her." The weakness all the family had of Rachel's weakness, peculiar disposition, and the sympathy with which they submitted to its exactions, is everywhere.

The strangers of course withdrew, and so before they had caught a glimpse of Rachel, as by her father, approaching nurse, with nurse standing gathered, while all the other members of the family stood aside seemingly desisting when was going.

Mademoiselle Rachel withdrew next morning after this loss. Her health required change of scene, and she chose Brussels that the night is near the physician in whom she placed most reliance.

Miss Smithson, the English actress who had made so favorable an impression in France, died in the spring of this year. The French critics exhausted every expression of regret on this untimely loss.

But in the autumn the news reached Europe of a death that was more deeply felt than either of the preceding ones, that of Henriette Sontag, Countess Rossi. Though the world-wide celebrated *cantatrice* had fulfilled the career—in regard to years—of a singer, though hers could not be called a premature loss like those of the two actresses carried off, the one in the full flush of youth, the other in the maturity of her talent, there were circumstances attending it that rendered it far more sad and gloomy than theirs. This noble-hearted woman, venturing again on the scene of former triumphs at the risk of withering the laurels of past years and annihilating the very memory of her fame, seeking in a new world to recuperate the loss of fortune entailed on her children, and dying in that far-distant land away from those for whom she struggled so valiantly and whom she loved so dearly, left deep regrets in the hearts of all those who had known her. The amiability and kindness of her disposition, her conduct as a wife and as a mother, had won her as



much love and respect in private life as her vocal talents had fame and admiration in her public career. From the Grand Duke, who does honor to her memory with the crown of silver laurels he deposits on her coffin, to the poor waiting-maid who with tears continually recalls the constant goodness of her mistress, the laments her loss occasioned were heard from the lips of all who had been privileged to approach her.

This year, too, died one whose life and end contrast sadly with the last, and should be a useful lesson to the young and presumptuous, who deem that headstrong will and ambition constitute power, were they ever willing to take warning from such terrible examples.

While Mademoiselle Rachel was throning at the Théâtre Français, in the full maturity of her powers, and receiving more applause and broad pieces than any of her predecessors had ever done, one, who at the very commencement of her successful career, had attempted competition with her, was expiring on board a miserable craft bound for that *refugium peccatorum*, California. The body, wrapped in an old sail, with a huge mass of coal as weight, and thrown into the deep with few regrets and fewer prayers, was all that remained of the once gay, vain, handsome Helena Gaussin.

governable in either case, she threw the blame of her defeat on her whom she denominated her rival, Rachel, and attempted revenge by hissing her. This impotent expression of rage sealed her fate; after the scene of tumult and disorder to which her unbridled rage had given rise, she was forcibly expelled, and the doors of the Théâtre Français were for ever closed against her. She took refuge in the provinces, and reigned there with uncontrolled sway for some time. Her next appearance in the columns of the newspapers was in a very different character—to her name was attached the ignominious epithet of thief. The *Méropé* had stolen dinner-plate—*Athalie* had enveloped her diadem in the greasy napkins of a *restaurant*. When she came out of prison a man was found generous enough to give his name to conceal her shame. But nothing could save her; once again she was on the police-sheets for theft; once more that beautiful hair was cut and she was sent to keep company with the lowest and most abandoned of her sex.

Mistaken vanity had crazed the weak brains, and the next time poor Helena was heard of was in the rôle of a prophetess, preaching a new gospel, receiving communications from the divinity. In 1848 she was apprehended on the barricades

where, with waving banner and frantic words, this Tisiphone was inciting the populace to deeds of blood.

It was then that some charitable persons, pitying the degradation and wretchedness of the poor outcast, obtained means for her to be sent to California, and it was on her way thither that, worn out by excesses of every description, alone and friendless, the unhappy creature died, having, in the course of an existence that lasted but thirty years, run the gauntlet of every sin and every shame.

Notwithstanding the last-announced resignation, Mademoiselle Rachel re-appeared on the 18th of September in the rôle of *Marie Stuart*, playing with a perfection of *entente de la scene* that she had never before displayed in this, one of the greatest of Schiller's conceptions — one which the French translator could not wholly spoil.

But while Mademoiselle Rachel delighted the public, in whose good graces she now seemed completely reinstated, she had either forgotten, or she did not choose to remember, that in the month of April she had written to M. Legouv  : "At the expiration of my *cong  * I will undertake 'Med  e.' " M. Legouv   had not the same motives for short memory, and, seeing she took no notice of him or

his production, though she had made her *rentrée* in May, ventured to recall it to her. She again sought an excuse in her sister's illness, her grief incapacitated her from studying a new *rôle*. But the subterfuge was of no avail, the poet would be put off no longer, and returned the following answer, written in a spirit of inflexibility quite foreign to his nature, but always within the limits of courtesy he was incapable of outstepping:—

“DEAR MADAME,

“No one can sympathise more deeply with the sorrows of others, than one who like myself has experienced similar ones, and I also know how much courage is required to undertake any kind of occupation when the heart is full of anxiety. But, alas! the stern law of necessity governs us all. We are all compelled to pursue the exercise of our profession amid anxieties of all kinds, and I may add that this necessity of labor is perhaps the only real alleviation of deep grief.

“You have had within your own knowledge a very striking proof of this; four years ago one of your most honorable comrades, M. Regnier, lost his daughter; but he had promised M. Augier he would play in ‘Gabrielle,’ and the success he obtained in that play was all the more gratifying

from the consciousness that it is unbecoming & unfit for  
and unbecoming & unfit for a friend.

"I can well understand, dear Madame, that it is the  
best moment of your life for the present sight of the dear  
father's remains you should have the pleasure of  
a new life; but I am now sure that in reflection  
you will acknowledge that we have no right to  
consider the interests of others as not just our  
interests of our own, even the most legitimate,  
and that you will seek support in an increased de-  
mand in the duties incumbent upon you and in  
the interests which have been confided to you.

"This is, perhaps, a very serious letter, dear  
Madame, but I know to whom I write it. I may  
add that it is even in the name of your dear sister  
Bernard that I ask you to resume again the rehearsal  
of 'Mabelle.' You know she liked the work,  
and already forewarn you in it full of passion and  
patriotism. Give her then the greatest pleasure she  
can wish you, the news of a new success obtained  
by you.

"I remain, &c.,

"LEGOUVE.

This letter made no impression on her to whom  
it was addressed. Feeling, however, that the posi-  
tion was becoming one of immediate difficulty,

she had recourse to the ordinary and extraordinary diplomatic negotiations. She commissioned the discreet and skilful agent who had been the former medium of communication to signify her ultimatum to M. Legouv  , and with this object addressed to Mademoiselle de Saigneville a letter, which the latter was to show to the author but not leave in his hands.

Mademoiselle de Saigneville commenced on the 20th of September her negotiation as follows :

“It is with the deepest grief, dear M. Legouv  , that I send you my friend’s letter, (I beg you will return it as soon as you have read it.)

“I will not seek to justify Rachel’s conduct towards you. You see that she herself acknowledges her fault, and that she is right in believing that I give her a great proof of my attachment in consenting to communicate so sad a resolution to you. But believe me, *do not insist*, make this sacrifice to the future. She has obtained another leave of absence, she will return again next year, and, if you are generous enough to remain her friend, how powerful will be your right to make her play in some other work ! She has resolved *never* to create another modern tragic part ; she says the ancient classic repertory

will furnish her with more characters than she can create. (And here she may be right.)

“Come, now, be noble and generous; set to work, write for her an interesting drama, such as you know so well how to make, and we shall all be happy.

“SAIGNEVILLE.”

The letter alluded to as accompanying the above ran as follows:

“DEAR LOUISE,

“I COME to beg you will undertake a mission to M. Legouvé; I know well how disagreeable it will be to you, but you have so accustomed me to your kind offices I do not fear to rely on them in such a case of necessity.

“I positively cannot play *Medée*; it is in vain that I have endeavored to undertake it; I have gone so far as to learn all the first act, but I have such an antipathy to the part that it were vain for me to expect sympathy in a character that is almost odious, and that is too well known to cause any sensation in the public, even in the most terrific passages. You see, dear friend, what a task I am giving you. I dare not

write to M. Legouvé, fearing he should come to me immediately, and indeed I am not sufficiently restored to my usual health to look at and listen\* coolly to the almost deserved reproaches which the author of '*Médée*' has, perhaps, a right to make, for I have accepted the *rôle*, I have even rehearsed it twice at the theatre; but although I may have been tenfold wrong, I cannot bind myself to play well a part unsuited to my tragic powers. I cannot, therefore, go forward and risk a failure when the moment when I shall quit the stage is not far distant.

"Go and see, or write to M. Legouvé. What I exact of your love for me, for our *Adrienne*, is that M. Legouvé will still remain my friend, despite the vexation I cause him and which I so earnestly desire to cancel some day.

"*Les Horaces*' greatly fatigued me this evening. To-morrow I shall go and breathe the air of Montmorency; for Heaven's sake use your endeavors that M. Legouvé be not too angry with me. You know how very little suffices to shake my poor nerves and cause me great suffering.

\* When Mademoiselle Rachel sent this letter it is probable she had not her usual secretary at hand, and was obliged to indite as well as write it herself.



"I am your devoted friend; prove to me on this occasion that I also can rely on you.

"RACHEL."

This desire, so coaxingly expressed, to be friends with the author, even the tender allusion to his play, "*our Adrienne*," all was insufficient to fool him any longer; his patience was exhausted, and Mademoiselle Rachel was again sued to appear on the 19th of October.

In the meanwhile she continued to play her classic *rôlés*, delighting the numerous spectators who, attracted by the Exposition Universelle from every part of Europe to Paris, took that opportunity of hearing her. The poor young woman little foresaw that this was the last season but one she would be permitted to display her talent on the French stage on which, had she been less grasping, less eager for rapid gains, she might have pursued a longer, more lasting, and more glorious career.

In the meanwhile the day appointed for the trial arrived. On the 18th of October the hall of the Tribunal de Première Instance was crowded. M. de Belleyne, a magistrate as well known for his strict principles of justice as for his love of arts, presided. The born champion of the

victims of their passions and of artists of every kind, M. Chaix-d'Est-Ange was there ready to cover Mademoiselle Rachel's sins with the folds of his toga, while M. Mathieu, a clever and witty young lawyer, was appointed to expose the griefs suffered by M. Legouv  .

The task of the latter was not a difficult one, for the proofs were numerous and clear.

The orator thought proper to take up the matter in hand, from the beginning of the friendship that had existed between his client and Mademoiselle Rachel. Having dwelt on the motives that had given rise to that friendship, and entitled the author to some gratitude on the part of the actress, he gave the origin of "*Med  e*," written at Mademoiselle Rachel's request, enthusiastically applauded by her, and the competent *aresopagus* assembled in her *salon* to decide on its merits—in confirmation of which, letters were read addressed to M. Legouv   by Messieurs Henri, Martin and Charlton—the subsequent reception of the play by the *comit   de lecture*, of the theatre and its rehearsal there, also corroborated by letters from Messieurs Haitland, R  gnier, Maubant, and Davesne. M. Mathieu then related the fickle conduct of the actress, her several capricious refusals, her want of good faith, the condescension

of M. Legouvé on the eve of her departure for Russia.

"He was not aware," exclaimed the eloquent advocate, "that this great *artiste*, whose excursion had cost the Théâtre Français more than 200,000fr., had another god besides her art. He was soon obliged to recognise that; for her, the stage was but a means, that gold was her aim."

He then stigmatised her conduct towards France, to whom she was bound, who could have opposed her voyage to Russia, and yet who generously furthered it, receiving in return as a testimonial of the actress' gratitude the notification of her resignation on her return. M. Legouvé shared the same fate; he, too, was rewarded for all the proofs of devoted friendship he had shown her by the notification that "decidedly she could not play *Medée*."

The orator concluded by saying that French literature was interested in the question.

"It must not," said he, "be left to the mercy of Mademoiselle Rachel's caprices. It was not thus that Talma acted. Many authors have had cause to complain of Mademoiselle Rachel's fantastic versatility. She also refused to play 'La Fille du Cid' after accepting the part. 'Virginie,' 'Charlotte Corday,' 'Frédègonde and Brunchaut' were alike ac-

cepted, rejected and accepted again without reason. Mademoiselle Rachel must be compelled under some severe penalty to keep her engagements. It is much to excite admiration, but esteem is of more value ; and nothing can make amends for want of integrity, not even glory ! ”

The case of Mademoiselle Rachel was a difficult one to defend, and with all his skill M. Chaix-d'Est-Ange could not prove that she had not solicited M. Legouvé's tragedy, that she had not personally approved and applauded it, that she had caused it to be rehearsed, had not taken her part and distributed the others, and that, after numerous and long delays, she had not, under fallacious pretences, refused the work.

The only part of his plea in which he could retort with some show of success his adversary's arguments was when he endeavored to answer the reproach that Rachel had but one idol—gold. He insisted that the reproach was equally applicable to the other side.

“ Mademoiselle Rachel,” said he, “ is accused of loving gold beyond all things, beyond her art, beyond her glory. Gold is her god ! Yet we notice that M. Legouvé has not for gold the contempt he would lead us to infer he had. He begins by claiming 40,000fr. damages. It would ill become

him to affect indifference for pecuniary interests. No man's good for him is no chance."

M. Legouvé, however, immediately parried the effect of this argument, as business, by declaring that he had fixed the amount for the sake of form only; that he renounced it altogether, and left the penalty entirely to the discretion of the tribunal.

The court decided against Mademoiselle Rachel, who was to resume and continue "on the day designated by the management of the Théâtre Français" the rehearsals of "Modée," and act the part designated for her by the author, or in default thereof to pay to M. Legouvé damages to the amount of 200fr. for every day she delayed doing so, and that during two months, after which a further decision would be taken.

This decision would seem, at first sight, very satisfactory to M. Legouvé; it was, however, followed by no result: the management of the Théâtre Français, to whom was left the right of appointing the days of rehearsal, having failed to do so. It was not until some time after that M. Legouvé was to obtain a more adequate compensation for the injury he had sustained.

As for Mademoiselle Rachel, she was on the eve of finding in her very ingratitude its severe

and deserved punishment. If she had disdained the charms of "Medée" it was not on account of the little failings and misdeeds of the enchantress, but because she had been allured by a dame of like gentle temper, one *Rosemonde*—not the fair Rosamond of English ballads and tradition, whose beauty was fatal to herself alone—but a Lombard queen whom M. Latour de St. Ybars aroused from her peaceful slumbers in the old nooks of Gothic story to bring before the Parisians, under the patronage of Mademoiselle Rachel.

It appears that Mademoiselle Rachel had knocked at more than one door to obtain the "short tragedy containing one very brilliant part" which she had solicited of M. Legouvé. "Medée," with her three acts, and her suite, was not what she wished; "Rosemonde," with her one act and three personages, pleased her better. "Medée" was a *rôle* of the ancient *repertoire*, minus the superiority of the great masters. "Rosemonde" was the frantic, dishevelled offspring of young literature that was to stand forward with *eclat* in the gallery of antiques that constituted Mademoiselle Rachel's dramatic luggage.

It now became plain that while the *tragédienne*

was alleging her health, her resignation, her excursions, her domestic afflictions to avoid playing *Medée*, declaring solemnly she never intended creating another rôle, that fear would paralyse her powers, that the press would not sustain her, that she would not risk compromising seventeen years of success by a failure, she was at that very time busy studying *Rosemonde*. She was learning it in secret with the passionate enthusiasm she had shown for *Louise de Lignerolles*. She flattered herself with the hope of crowning her Parisian career with a brilliant triumph, and deemed she could carry to America a play, short and easy to get up, that would afford an opportunity for the display of all her powers and the entire interest of which would centre in herself.

The decision of the court that sentenced Mademoiselle Rachel to play "Medée" was pronounced on the 21st of October. On the 27th of November Mademoiselle Rachel, encouraged by the complaisant complicity of the manager, appeared for the first time in "Rosemonde."

What motive could have actuated the *tragédienne* to adopt so strange a course it is difficult to imagine. It could scarcely be that the remembrance of her success in "Virginie" was proof against that of her failure in the absurd "Vieux de la

Montagne." At any rate, whatever hopes author and actress had raised on the present preposterous creation were doomed to disappointment. Mademoiselle Rachel had hoped that horror carried to the utmost limits would cause a great sensation—the effect was the opposite to that expected, the spectators were rather inclined to laughter—the great *tragédienne* was simply ridiculous!

"Rosemonde," withal, possessed one merit, and that a very great one in the present case—there was but one act of it. Yet it was a tragedy, and the author by virtue of that title had a right to inflict five acts on the public. Notwithstanding what some modern author says, that it is "so easy not to make tragedies in five acts," some credit is due to M. Latour St. Ybars for his forbearance. He suppressed the first four and served up the last only, crowding into that one all the horrors he was at liberty to have spread over five acts.

The theme chosen is one of the ferocious incidents that abound in the early history of every nation. The author cannot be accused of having altered or disguised historical truth; on the contrary, he has veiled none of its hideous nakedness, he has softened none of the revolting particulars.

M. Latour evidently meant to draw forth all the



chief characteristics of Mademoiselle Rachel. His attempt was not altogether ill-founded. Setting aside the impossibility of reconciling with the laws of modern taste the ghoulish incidents he allowed to stand, there were dramatic points which a great poet would have made very effective. But, unfortunately, in "Rosemonde" we have the most intensely tragical occurrences developed in the most trivial, weak, nerveless language. The ferocity of the idea is completely lost in the tameness of the expression; that which in the magnificent, passionate, all-powerful poetry of Victor Hugo would have sent a thrill of terror through every heart, in the milk-and-water style of M. Latour caused *ennui* or derision.

According to the chronicler, after reigning three years and a-half in Italy, Alboin was assassinated by his wife in 373. The cause of the crime was the following:

The King having become excited with wine during a banquet, ordered that a bowl, made of her father's skull, should be presented to the Queen, bidding her joyously drink with her father (*ut cum patre suo lætanter biberet.*)

"The thing," adds the old narrator, Paul Diacre, "may appear impossible, but I speak the truth in Jesus Christ; I have seen the bowl."

The unfortunate Rosemonde being informed afterwards what bloody trophy had touched her lips, vowed revenge. Having seduced the King's armour-bearer, Helmichis, and Peredeus, one of the bravest champions among the Lombards, she caused the King to be assassinated.

M. Latour, suppressing such details of the seductions employed by the Queen as were too disgusting for the stage, and which may be found at length in "Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," gives the story in all its barbaric horrors.

*Alboin*, King of the Lombards, having vanquished and killed *Cunimund*, King of the Gepidæ, chooses among the captives *Rosemonde*, the daughter of his late foe, for his queen. At a banquet given to celebrate his victory, the barbarian, maddened with the fumes of debauch, compels *Rosemonde* to drink from the skull of her father. Among the earls of *Alboin* is one who, having been sent some time previous to the war on an embassy to her father's Court, had seen and fallen in love with *Rosemonde*. Absent on another expedition at the time of the defeat of *Cunimund*, he returns to find the daughter has been selected by the victor. *Earl Didier* is consequently the fittest instrument for her vengeance. To arm his

hand against his King she promises her own and the crown as his reward. When the deed is perpetrated *Rosemonde* fulfils part of her promise. She recommends *Didier* to the people as the successor of *Alboin*, and places the crown on his head. As for herself, she dies on her father's grave of the poison she has taken. One or two other deaths of minor importance fill up this framework of murder, profanity, treason, and vengeance.

This tragical story has been dramatised more than once already by French poets. We find it put on the stage as far back as the year 1609 by Claude Billard, Prior of Canterbury, the same who the following year caused the "Death of Henry IV." to be played before Marie de Medicis in mourning. A year or two before, Nicholas d'Argentan wrote his "*Alboin ou la Vengeance Trahie*." In 1649, Balthazar Baro again put "*Rosemonde*" upon the stage. In more modern times Alfieri also chose this heroine, though not at the same period of her life. Indeed, he laid aside the facts altogether, and substituted incidents of his own invention.

The choice of the locality itself, though historically faithful, jars with all our preconceived ideas. True, all Italy was at the time devastated

by the barbaric hordes of the North ; yet one would not wish to find the scene which the loves of *Romeo* and *Juliette* have invested with such tender and melancholy associations, the fair city sought with delight by the antiquary and anticipated so gracefully by the poet :

“ Are these the distant turrets of Verona ?

And shall I sup where Juliet at the masque  
Saw her lov'd Montague and now sleeps by  
him ? ”

selected as the charnel-house, the shambles in which wild beasts enact their butcheries. M. Latour does not say with Dante :

“ Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti.”

He bids us look on a far different scene ; here we have neither the rose nor the nightingale, we have an orgie in which besotted barbarians, drunk with the fumes of blood and wine, and despairing captives, the living spoils of the most ferocious war, are mingled ; the former are howling the burthen of their song of battle, with accompaniment of cymbals, horns, and clashing shields. The song of the bard is in keeping with the deeds he celebrates.

Some dramatists are induced to choose their epoch and nation on account of the picturesque beauty of the costume of that time and people.

If we consult the historian we will hardly be inclined to accuse M. Latour of having been guided by any such puerile considerations.

“The dress of the ancient Lombards consisted of loose linen garments; their legs and feet were clothed in long hose and open sandals; and even in the tranquility of peace a sword was constantly girt to their side; their heads were shaven behind, but their hair before hung over their eyes and mouth, and a long beard represented the name and character of the nation.”

For further particulars we have the testimony of Cunimund, the Prince of the Gepidæ :

“The Lombards,” said the rude barbarian, “resemble in figure and smell the mares of our Samaritan plains.”

“Add another resemblance,” replied an audacious Lombard, “you have felt how strongly they kick. Visit the plains of Asfeld, and seek for the bones of thy brother; they are mingled with those of the vilest animals.”

The above interchange of compliments preceded the war and atrocities which are the groundwork of the tragedy.

Whether the actress was terrified at the responsibility she had assumed, or that, accustomed to the sublime beauties of the classic *repertoire*, she felt

herself uninspired by this modernised tissue of horrors, and, losing confidence in its success at the very moment of trial, lost confidence in her own powers, or whether the attitude of the public disheartened her, from whatever cause it might be, this character, so obstinately adopted in despite of all taste, reason and judgment, was ill sustained by her. It lingered a very few nights and was then dropped for ever.

With its manifold faults the play possessed points well suited to Mademoiselle Rachel. It is said that Racine borrowed from the "*Rosemonde*" of Bathazar Baro the character of *Hermione*—Mademoiselle Rachel's best part. The scene of the Greek Princess instigating *Orestes* to the murder of *Pyrrhus* certainly presents a striking analogy with that in which *Rosemonde* endeavors to persuade *Ermigius* to slay *Alboin*; the arguments used by *Hermione* and the answers of the hesitating, reluctant *Orestes*, though clothed in the far superior poetry of Racine, are the same, in reality, as those of Baro's heroine and hero; then again, there is so great a resemblance, in fact, between some of the situations of M. Latour's play and those of "*Andromaque*" that it is somewhat strange Mademoiselle Rachel did not feel sustained by the resemblance. There are others, too, where her

tragic expression and attitudes had excellent opportunities of display; for instance, in the scene where the tyrant, mortally wounded, drags himself on the stage and is met by *Rosemonde* entering with a lamp to ascertain if the deed has been well done. The King, on retiring, had found *Egilde*, one of *Rosemonde's* women, dressed in the regal robes, dead on his couch. He has not mistaken her for the queen he had chosen, and, being set upon by his murderer, has had no time to discover his error, hence his first exclamation, when the real *Rosemonde* meets him, à la *Lady Macbeth*, with her lamp:

“ Cette femme, quelle est cette femme ? ”

*Rosemonde.*

“ La haine

La vengeance, tardive, il est vraie, mais  
certaine.”

*Alboin.*

“ Ah ! ”

*Rosemonde.*

“ Regarde-moi bien.”

*Alboin.*

“ Fantôme, que veux-tu ? ”

*Rosemonde.*

“ Je veux te voir mourir à mes pieds  
abattu.”

*Alboin (tombe près de sa couronne).*

“Rosemonde! . . . elle est morte.”

*Rosemonde.*

“Elle est encore vivante

Pour jouir de ta mort et de ton épou-  
vante.”

*Alboin.*

“Mes armes! dieux d’enfer!” &c., &c.

*Rosemonde* makes a long speech to the dying King, the pith of which M. Latour found in the five magnificent lines of *Polynice* to *Eteocles*, in Racine’s “Les Frères Ennemis :”

“Et tu meurs, lui dit il, et moi je vais régner  
Regarde dans mes mains l’empire et la victoire  
Va rougir aux enfers de l’excès de ma gloire ;  
Et pour mourir encore avec plus de regret,  
Traître, songe en mourant que tu meurs mon  
sujet.”

We cannot say that *Rosemonde’s* harangue is “sweetness long drawn out,” but the idea so concisely and powerfully expressed by Racine has been so expanded, diluted, spun out in M. Latour’s prosy style, that all the original horror is lost.

The coldness with which the public received this feast of Atreus reacted on Mademoiselle Rachel. Her delivery was so precipitate, hacked and indistinct, that it was often necessary to wait



the reply to know the meaning of what she had said. It was true that she was never quite mistress of herself on first nights; but aside from the emotion incidental to the fear of failure, there could not be in this Queen of the French stage, whose will was omnipotent, the anxiety of the young and timid *débutante*, whose untried powers have few, if any, chances of pleasing. She had chosen the play, she had brought it out, she was bound to exert herself to the utmost for its support.

Either the vexation of failure, or some other unknown cause, acted on her nerves to such an extent that after the fall of the curtain she was seized with a fit of hysterics that was so violent and lasted so long it was feared her reason was in danger; she tore her veil, dashed from her the crown and threw down, with looks of frantic horror, her poniard.

An explanation of this singular scene was sought in the supposition that it was the remembrance of the death of her sister Rebecca that had awakened a paroxysm of delirious grief. But it is difficult to find any analogy between this recent family bereavement and the tragedy of "Rosemonde."

The result of this last miscalculation was that

Mademoiselle Rachel, vexed and ashamed, retired under the usual pretence of ill health.

Mademoiselle Rachel had introduced the celebration of the anniversary of Corneille; it occurred at last to the management that there was another great man to whom they were equally indebted, and the anniversary of whose birth was equally entitled to dramatic honors. On the 21st of December, the Théâtre Français inaugurated the celebration of Racine's birthday; the *tragédienne* condescending for that day to forget she was ill, and act "Phèdre."

Since the unfortunate exit of "Rosemonde," this was the first time Mademoiselle Rachel had appeared on the stage. She retired into her tent and did not come forth again until the latter part of January of the following year.

## CHAPTER X.

1855.

"La Czarine"—Melpomene in Hysterics—A Formidable Rival—Adelaïde Ristori, the Siddons of Italy—"Francesca da Rimini"—"La Pia de Tolomei"—"Maria Stuarda."

DURING her temporary absence from the stage Mademoiselle Rachel was studying a new *rôle* in a drama in five acts, by M. Scribe, "La Czarine," which was brought out in January of this year. As the student of history will not think of consulting M. Scribe's plays as works of reference, it is unnecessary to quarrel with that author's peculiar mode of treating historical events and personages; in truth he has merely borrowed high-sounding names, the incidents and characters are entirely of his own invention.

Among the subjects that apparently pleased him best was the celebrated Catherine, wife of Peter the Great. Finding her very successful in

the "Etoile du Nord," he tried her without the partition and at a more advanced period of her existence, substituting Mademoiselle Rachel for the musical charms of which he now divested her. The hero is no longer Peter, the shipwright, enamoured of the fair young gipsy, and committing no worse crime than that of an extra glass to drown the sorrow her absence occasions. At the present stage of his existence, Peter is advanced in his imperial career; he has learned his various trades and is now giving his subjects the benefit of his experience. He has already founded St. Petersburg, conquered Sweden, fought with Turkey, butchered his son Alexis, drowned in torrents of blood the conspiracy of the Strelitz, and carried to some extent his system of civilisation, effected according to the principles of barbarism. Czar Peter is more at leisure now, and turns his mind entirely to his own little domestic affairs, which he regulates according to his usual expeditious system. To keep his hand in, this imperial executioner amuses himself with putting to death the admirers of his beloved Czarine. In fact, there is much more of the Ogre of fairy tales, and much less of the Czar in this *Peter* than there was even in the historical one, and he is much better suited for the tyrant of

the melo-dramas in favor on the Boulevards than for the hero of a play at the Théâtre Français, whose more refined and critical audience tolerated with difficulty this brutal Provost Marshal.

The *Czarine* has not one great quality, one marked characteristic, one attractive point to raise her above the common level; the author could not have written a more insignificant, pointless, colorless *rôle* for Mademoiselle Rachel. There is not from beginning to end a fine passage, an energetic speech.

The other characters are a set of Russians such as were presented as specimens of the nation at the Théâtre du Cirque during the Crimean war. There is an *Admiral Vilderbeck*, a sort of Dutch-Russian, always tipsy, always ridiculous, who is the unconscious marplot in the play; *Jakinsky*, an automaton spy of the *Czar's*—he acts, but leaves the talking to others; *Menschikoff*, the unfortunate *Menschikoff* so ill-treated by La Harpe, expiates, by the gratuitous charge of poisoning *Peter the Great*, now brought against him by M. Scribe, the hatred which the people of France bore the *Menschikoff* of 1855; *Olga*, his daughter, a simple, candid little girl who can, when required, show a very heroic spirit, but whose combustible heart catches fire like a little keg of

powder at the approach of the spark *Sapieha*; *Sapieha*, a young Pole, cut on the pattern of the Lauzuns, a courtier fresh from the Versailles of the Œil de Bœuf.

With these stereotyped personages, reproduced again and again in their proper sphere at the Porte St. Martin, any dramatist of M. Scribe's school was sure to proceed on exactly the same plan as the master, and to produce a play in the same monotonous, lukewarm and superficial style as the majority of those this fertile and skilful playwright has made the public applaud so repeatedly.

*Count Sapieha*, just arrived from the Court of France, is the lion of the semi-barbaric Court which *Cæsar Peter* is civilising with his cane and pruning with the axe; the ladies of the Court invite him to more *rendezvous* than he has time or inclination to attend to, for he aspires to no less than an imperial heart and disdains the conquest of any of lower station. *Peter*, who is as jealous as a tiger, has lately chopped off the head of *Mœus de la Croix*, the last admirer of his wife, and is looking out very sharply to catch the next. The fate of his predecessor only makes the new pretender more boastful and daring; he openly avows his hopes to *Vilderbeck*, a very faithful

friend, but too much given to indiscretions when in his cups. *Catherine* knows of this love, and encourages it as an agreeable diversion to the *ennui* and repulsion the brutality of her spouse inspires; she is not a bit more discreet than her lover, and unhesitatingly develops her ideas on the subject to *Menschikoff*, who had himself been the happy possessor of her heart in former days, but, like a good courtier, had yielded it up to his master. *Menschikoff* does not object to the Czarine's new fancy on moral grounds, but only as entailing dangerous results. *Peter*, who is absent, has set him to watch *Catherine*, but, having no great confidence in his minister, has appointed *Jakinsky*, another spy, to look after the first. *Menschikoff* repays the Czarine's frankness by the information that having been, on some slight occasion, caned by his imperial master before all the Court, he, the favorite, intends to take an early opportunity of paying back the little favor.

In the meanwhile the Czarine promotes *Count Sapieha* to the post of Chamberlain, and *Olga*—who, following the fashion, has fallen in love with the dashing, Frenchified Pole, is unconsciously her rival—to that of maid-of-honor, and admits her, by a special favor, to lodge in a pavilion occupied by herself. So far matters have gone on smoothly

enough, but here the *embroglio* begins. *Vilderbeck*, going home late, in rather a confused state of mind, wanders into the gardens of the palace, finds a door open, enters a pavilion and catches a glimpse of a lady in white, who screams and puts out the light. At this moment a powerful grasp is laid on his shoulders and he is tumbled down stairs and out of doors very unceremoniously. The next morning he finds himself at his own door, half frozen and quite unconscious how he got there. In the scuffle a chamberlain's key has been dropped; this key, picked up by *Jakinsky*, like Bluebeard's, gets every one into a scrape; it is shown to the Czar, whose suspicions it arouses. *Vilderbeck*, being questioned, relates his nocturnal adventure—it was too dark to recognise his assailant or the lady, and he was too tipsy to remember the locality of the scene. However, the key is proved to be the Count's, and he is summoned before the imperial inquisitor.—What was he doing there?—He was there for—*Olga*! Very well, he must immediately repair damages by marrying *Olga*, who, on her side, knowing nothing of the adventure, joyfully consents to obey orders and take the husband provided for her.

The play might have been brought to a close here, the fascinating Count turning out to have



been in love with pretty *Miss Olga* all the time, and to have really made with her the *rendezvous* that has so greatly troubled the Czar and occasioned his spouse to be accused falsely. This natural conclusion here would have added the "Czarine" to the long list of comedies furnished by M. Scribe, per contract, to the Gymnase. It may be that this was originally the case, and that it had remained in this state in M. Scribe's drawer until the time of the Crimean expedition, when the sequel was tacked on. The drama is all in the last three acts, in which are, also, all the allusions to Constantinople and to the Turks, the hated foes of *Peter the Great*; the Turkish Ambassador at the Court of Russia is the man who once, thanks to *Catherine's* interposition, permitted the Czar to escape when he might have driven him into the Pruth. One might suppose these incidents would influence the action of the drama; they have, however, nothing to do with it. While *Menshikoff* and his master are having a little familiar discussion on political matters, a common-place remark of *Peter* to *Olga*, who is present, with regard to her husband, draws forth an answer which arouses all his lately-appeased suspicions. *Sapieha* has not spent his wedding-night with his bride! The Czarine and the Count exchange, when they

think themselves alone, a few words, which were  
heard by Olga, reveal the secret. She is not  
as a cloak to shield her mother. In the  
the more deeply the secret is known, the more  
the poor little wife is left in the hands of  
endeavor to persuade her to leave her mother  
loved by the Count. Her mother, however,  
Peter is convinced that he is the only one who  
mined in revenge. He tells Olga that he  
orders the execution of his mother. She  
uses her influence to save her mother from  
vails on her former lover, for his sake  
to convey her present self to the mansion of  
his own carriage. But as the Count is not  
the fact of Olga, her mother's position is not  
him. Her beauty and grace are gone, and  
changed the nature of the Count's love. He  
fascinated by the Count's mother, however, he  
he now knows the truth, and he is not  
in the Count's carriage. He is not  
carriage, which was in the Count's  
and brought her to a carriage, which he  
of the palace is in the Count's carriage. He  
refinement of society, which he is  
view the Count, that he may, with his  
nance the sign of his mother's guilt. But the  
proof of her guilt. But the Count's

dismal preparations calmly, for she is resolved that she will end her own life when the Count dies. Her coolness convinces the Czar of her innocence, and he countermands the execution, telling *Catherine* he now believes there was no love on her side for *Sapieha*; he adds that he is equally convinced *Sapieha* has none for her, having just intercepted the Count's last adieu to his young wife, a letter full of expressions of passionate tenderness, in which he assures her she alone is mistress of his heart, &c., &c. *Catherine*, who could look on calmly when her lover was to lose his head, when she finds she has lost his heart, is overwhelmed with rage. Careless of consequences, she vents her jealousy openly, and the incensed Czar re-orders the execution. But ere the sentence can pass his lips his words are cut short by his own death. *Menschikoff*, in order to save his daughter, *Olga*, has hastened the execution of his plans; the Czar is poisoned by him. This sudden death puts other thoughts in *Catherine's* mind. She sends the Count as Ambassador to Warsaw, with his bride: as for her, she will live only to reign.

On the following day there was a great dinner given in honor of the *tragédienne*, by Doctor Véron, and St. Beuve, Mérimée, Aubert,

Halevy, M. Alcegart, and Scribe, were among the guests. The invitations had not been sent out with all probability when it was decided to give a play and the actress would have had a brilliant success. The first night was a failure—the actress had, as was usual, not been on first nights. These disappointments had however not prevented the doctor's entertainment which had been so successful that it was nearly every one who had been there. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner.

M. Scribe, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner.

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This evening, the doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner. The doctor's wife, who was very young and very beautiful, had given a magnificent dinner.

Mademoiselle Rachel had pursued her course for eighteen years without meeting a single competitor who could cause her any serious alarm, but now there arose a new star on the dramatic horizon, which threatened, if not to eclipse, at least to rival her. On the 24th of May Madame Ristori appeared at the Italian Opera-house in the part of *Francesca da Rimini*. Never, perhaps, had a French actress been so universally admired in Paris as was this foreigner acting in a foreign idiom. Never certainly had she, even in her own land, where she was of course better understood, been the object of such extravagant enthusiasms. The critics pronounced her perfection, the public countersigned their decision. The success of the Italian Siddons was certainly without precedent if we consider that not over one-fourth part of her audience understood what was spoken otherwise than as it was interpreted by the marvellous eloquence of the countenance, attitude and gestures of the speaker. Her great effects were entirely due to the charm of the features, the magic of the exquisite voice.

When we say that the success of Madame Ristori was greater in France than it has ever been in Italy we do not mean it to be inferred

that there she was not duly appreciated. Though instances of the possessors of genius and talent meeting only with indifference from their fellow-citizens are numerous, and though the voice of the prophet seldom finds an echo at home, the applause of an Italian public has constantly followed the career of her whose admirable enunciation added new beauties to their harmonious language.

But it could not be expected that in towns where the theatre-going public remains always unchanged, enthusiasm can be kept up constantly by three or four dramatic works, brought before it by the same actress, however excellent she may be in her art, as in large capitals where the floating population is so numerous.

Thus, though long years had established the reputation of Madame Ristori in her native land, it was eclipsed by the more brilliant one a few weeks procured her in France. The perfect classic outline of this great talent had been hitherto fully admitted, but it remained for a Parisian audience—an audience of consummate taste, too long accustomed to excellence to ~~admire mediocrity~~—to discern its mystic and ~~characteristic~~ characteristics. Hence the triumph of ~~her talent~~ was in France as complete as it ~~was in Italy~~.

dreamy reverie and ardent passion. This characteristic, so specially her own, is portrayed on her countenance, the aspiration towards the ideal is in every feature; the purity of the brow, the oval *contour* of the face, the somewhat severe lines of the Roman nose, the nameless grace of those of the mouth, indicate the noblest feelings, a heartfelt sense of the beautiful, and the love of whatsoever is virtuous and good.

Another cause for her success, which was wholly independent of the profession, was the high opinion held of her character as a wife and a mother. The spectator was, unconsciously perhaps, under the influence of this superiority. Ere she opened her lips the natural dignity of her manner predisposed in her favor, rendering every heart sympathetic; when she spoke the hearers were under the charm of a voice of unparalleled sweetness, revealing candour and goodness unbounded—a voice that came fraught with every noble and generous feeling, directly from the heart that is their spring. The features and gestures may be schooled by strength of will and of intellect, to represent a great tragic part, even by a mind of perverted principles. Consummate talent and long stage-experience may give the power of expressing every bitter, strange, and

terrible effect of headlong, uncurbed passion, with an energy and force that strike terror into every heart; but if that of the actress has no tender fibres, her voice none of the moving chords, the melting accents that indicate a pure and generous nature, she will awaken no sympathy in the spectators—they may admire, they cannot love her.

The most charming of Madame Ristori's characters was undoubtedly that of *Francesca da Rimini*, and, among performers famed for their talent, she alone could give us the image of the veiled tenderness, the struggle between duty and passion, the truth and purity of Dante's beautiful creation; she alone could embody the spirit of the fair *Francesca*. On what stage could we find another profile so full of majestic grace, the chaste confusion of those eyes overarched by so noble a brow, and that radiant smile called up by the evanescent joys of love. And, above all, where else could we find that voice, anon vibrating soft, and girlishly gentle, then again quivering with the agony of grief, that voice we all recognise as that of *Paolo's* love? Its sound reaches the inmost soul of the listener, conveying far more meaning than the poetry it utters. Another actress might, perhaps, reproduce this type of *Francesca* with as much talent as Madame



Ristori; but with that talent the charm that emanates from the purity of the woman, and which blends with and raises the genius of the *artiste* to so sublime a height is a combination rarely—we dare not say never—met with. Our *souvenirs* of Madame Ristori would lead us to look on any other *Francesca* as less chaste, less idealised.

These remarks will apply to Madame Ristori's style of acting in all her characters, but more especially to the part we have just mentioned, and to that of "La Pia de Tolomei." The play of "Silvio Pellico" is more properly an elegy in three acts than a tragedy. A succession of exquisite shades of feeling alone redeems his work from an otherwise insupportable monotony: it is rather a charming poem, of which the actress is the soul, than a play. M. Carlos Marengo, when he wrote his drama of "La Pia," drew his inspiration from Pellico's tragedy; the latter is superior with regard to style, but, in both, interest and vigor are lacking; the plot is weak, the characters are tame. The patriotic sentiment that animates the fine passages of *Francesca*, which every Italian knows by heart, makes the play tolerated on the stage, and an actress like Madame Ristori renders the "Pia" endurable. If, then, she causes such a

sensation in plays that are, dramatically, below mediocrity, we may have some idea of what she could accomplish had she been the interpreter of a Corneille, a Racine, or a Shakespeare.

The part of *Maria Stuarda* has more variety, more striking dramatic situations; hence it excites more enthusiasm than those we have mentioned. The woman in her greatness and her weakness is here more apparent, particularly in the magnificent scene where, having struggled with admirably-expressed efforts against her rising wrath, the sarcasms of *Elisabeth* finally render it irrepressible, and it breaks out in a torrent of annihilating disdain and crushing contempt that overwhelms her rival; the rapturous, almost childish joy, with which she then congratulates herself on having purchased without hesitancy, and at the price of almost certain death, the bitter pleasure of revenge, is one of the most superb pieces of acting ever witnessed on any stage.

To analyse the various inspirations that actuate the actress in this character, we should have to quote the whole of it. The sudden gesture when *Maria* speaks of the hidden dangers that surround her; the passionate joy of the prisoner who once more sees the face of Heaven, the trees, the birds,

all nature ; the scene where, preparing for death, she bids a last adieu to her handmaidens with such melting, yet subdued, affection, so queenly still in her condescension, yet so gentle, so womanly in her love and care for these, her faithful ones ; and, at the close, the heart-rending, ecstatic pause during which the bitterness of death contends with and is finally absorbed in the heavenly hope that transports her beyond the terrible present, is a sublime inspiration springing from a deep religious feeling, from a soul filled with love of the beautiful ideal.

In "Medea," so difficult a part to bring before a modern public, the actress had to conquer the same obstacles as in that of "Myrrha." While she made her audience shudder, she had the power of ennobling characters and passions the most appalling, of exciting sympathy for heroines scarcely to be tolerated on the stage, without, however, losing any of the terrific energy which is one of her chief characteristics.

In the French classic drama Madame Ristori would be equally successful ; her interpretations of the feelings of an *Hermione*, a *Camille*, an *Emilie* would, we think, differ widely from that which has hitherto been given. The bitter sarcasm, the despairing anathemas, all the wild array

of passions that disfigures poor human nature in these splendid types, and which, from the day of their creation, have been portrayed with the furious rant of a maniac, would, by her, be brought into bold relief with new and striking effect. The mission of the tragic poet is to excite, in the highest degree, emotions of terror and pity, and never can this aim be so successfully accomplished as when the actress unites the noblest gifts of the heart to a splendid and cultivated intelligence.

It is said, with what truth we know not, though we feel no inclination to doubt it, that Madame Ristori is in the habit of seeking in mental prayer, before going on the stage, the strength and nerve she exhibits in her different characters, and that she places implicit reliance on the religious inspiration thus sought. This is a view of the vocation of dramatic artists never before taken, and one which, should the example find imitators, might lead to great results. It would certainly tend to dignify and elevate in an extraordinary degree the drama and its interpreters, and silence all the objections hitherto brought against them.

Those who have seen this charming actress in private life extol her modesty and simplicity. Her style on the stage partakes of her character—it is simple and unpretending in its very grandeur.

She is *true* in the artistic sense of the word, for she takes from nature the most energetic expression of its passions and always subordinates it to the laws of beauty with the exquisite tact that is innate in her. Were she to become more classical she might lose somewhat of her grace, while on the other hand, a more familiar, a more natural style would impair her dignity. No clap-trap, no eccentricity is mingled with her acting. She has invented no system of her own, consequently can have no imitators. Content with studying the human heart, she gives the rein to her own instinctive sense of what should be. This is the whole secret of the success of those poets and painters who have reached the highest summit of art. To those who would approach the superiority to which Madame Adélaïde Ristori has risen, we would say :

“Search your heart ; if it be pure, honest, truly pious, you may succeed, for those qualities are more necessary to an artist who would be loved and admired than is generally supposed.”

In reviewing the different phases of Mademoiselle Rachel's career, we have had occasion to appreciate the merit of the various critics who have made her the subject of their *feuilletons*. We do not lay claim to having given a complete list of

them, but among the masters of the pruning-knife whose judicious and eloquent articles so greatly contributed to her exaltation there is one we would feel it a reproach to have omitted had we not reserved his name for a special mention when that of his gifted countrywoman should find its place in these pages. Of all the dramatic critics of the Parisian journals, M. Fiorentino, who is alike master of French and Italian, is the most capable of correctly judging the talent of the two *tragédiennes* and of establishing a parallel between them.

There are, doubtless, in dramatic art, beauties that may be recognised and appreciated by spectators who understand the language but imperfectly. But to examine the subject in all its bearings and pronounce on its merits on all points, the conscientious critic must be perfectly familiar with the language, he must need no preliminary study to feel all its charm and power, to be a nice judge of elegance and purity of pronunciation, of correctness and truthfulness of intonation. He who does not possess this gift can only speak of the mimic talent of the actor. On all other points his opinion is subject to discussion, for his errors may be infinite.

An amusing instance of this occurred at the

time Wallack and his company alternated with the Italian company at the Italian Opera-house. A German family just arrived in Paris, and anxious to see the far-famed Madame Ristori, sent their *valet-de-place* to procure a box at the theatre where she performed. On the following night they were all installed at an early hour, and wondering at the little enthusiasm the half-empty house manifested. However, they listened attentively, neither understanding a word nor yet clearly making out the pantomime, but getting up, notwithstanding, a very lively admiration for the young and pretty Miss — whom they took for Madame Ristori. The next day they were congratulating themselves before some friends on their good fortune of the previous evening in seeing the charming Italian *tragédienne* in “Maria Stuarda” when, to their amazement, they were informed they had seen Miss — in *Desdemona*.

More than one French critic might have found himself making a similar mistake. Not so M. Fiorentino, who, a Neapolitan by birth, is, in wit and talent, a Frenchman. This writer is one of the few foreigners who have acquired the French language in such perfection that to them it is as their own, and who have borrowed even the character of the nation that has adopted them. Since

the days of the learned Abbé Galignani and Baron de Grimm we know of none who, not a Frenchman born, has been so thoroughly French in his language.

M. Fiorentino did not attain his present high position in the ranks of the French press without some trouble. He has had to struggle against jealousies, to conquer antipathies, to confound calumnies; but he has at last succeeded in taking his place. He openly edits the dramatic *feuilleton* of the "Constitutionnel," and, under the name of "de Rouvière," the musical *feuilleton* of the "Moniteur." Monsieur Fiorentino is especially noted for the correctness of his taste, for a style full of vivacity, piquancy, rich coloring, clearness and elegance; the romantic neologism which might be excusable in an Italian, never throws a blemish over his productions.

No one has written a more faithful and more highly-finished portrait of Madame Ristori, yet he has not been in any degree influenced by his nationality, and has done as complete justice to the cosmopolitan Rachel.

If we have entered on a somewhat minute description of the rival that sprung up so unexpectedly before the eyes of the autocrat of the Théâtre Français, the effect her advent had on



the capricious Rachel must excuse the apparent digression. From the voluntary retreat no prayers, no entreaties, no sense of equity could induce the imperious *sociétaire* to leave, the reception shown to Madame Ristori suddenly drew her. The echo of the applause so enthusiastically bestowed on the Italian Muse grated harshly on the ears of the French Melpomène; every word of praise addressed to another was a theft to her disadvantage. She was amazed that the public, in lieu of mourning her departure, thought her loss worthily compensated; she was vexed to the soul when she found her caprices, her sulks, her imperious will, totally unheeded, her smile or her frown no longer regulating the temperature within the walls of the temple. For the first time she trembled, for there was real danger—this was no competitor she could scorn or frown down. Right willing was she to descend from her throne and seek in distant lands the substantial gifts of Pluto, but she did not choose the vacant seat should be filled in the meanwhile. With swelling heart and lowering brow she went to see this fair-haired stranger who had crossed the Alps, bringing two crowns already from her own land, that of comedy and that of tragedy—a union of honors Rachel herself had failed to achieve.

It was on the 5th of June, Rachel, who had been vainly solicited to lend on the next evening her co-operation to the annual celebration of Corneille's birthday, had gone to the Théâtre Italien to see "*Myrrha*." At the moment that the daughter of *Pasiphæ* was receiving an ovation such as, perhaps, *Camille* herself had never been the object of, the latter came suddenly to the conclusion that she would grant what she had so obstinately refused; she, then and there, in her box, at nine o'clock in the evening, dispatched a note to M. Arsène Houssaye, desiring her name should be put on the bills in the morning for the performance of *Camille*.

During the tragedy she had steadfastly gazed at *Myrrha*, with mute, concentrated attention, but without giving the slightest token of approval. As an excuse for this discourteous conduct, a critic suggested that she was probably applauding internally. As a proof that her emotion was none the less powerful for being undemonstrative, he added that it had rendered her so ill that she was compelled to leave before the end of the play! Madame Ristori, complaining to M. Legouvé of the incivility of her sister *artiste*, in leaving in the middle of the play:

"Madame," replied the poet, "the jealousy of

Rachel was the only thing wanting to confirm your fame."

On the following evening a box having been politely placed by the manager of the Théâtre Français at the disposal of Madame Ristori, it was her turn to examine with studious attention the French *tragédienne*. Her approbation, however, was not silent, it was openly and exceedingly enthusiastic, bestowed with all the Italian *fougue*. She took her glass from her eye only to applaud, and ceased to applaud only to take it up again and resume her admiring gaze.

The next evening *Myrrha* was again performed, and again did Rachel witness the performance, but this time she thought fit to send a complimentary message to Madame Ristori.

But whatever her real feelings, it was soon evident that Rachel, piqued to the utmost by the faithlessness of the public, was determined to endeavor to arouse its former devotion, and turn the tide of allegiance that had dared to deviate from its proper course. She performed during the month of June the chief plays of her *repertoire*, in quick succession, and with all the animation and talent she possessed.

But though applause was liberally bestowed on her efforts she felt she no longer reigned alone.

Each day the press teemed with the praises of Madame Ristori, and not on her talent only were these lavish encomiums bestowed; her beauty, her charming, unaffected simplicity of manner, her tact, her domestic virtues, all were continually the themes of admiration. This was wormwood to her who never could brook the semblance of a rival near her throne, but she had committed faults that were irretrievable, and now paid the penalty. She had offended the public, and now the public had found a new toy and used it as an instrument to break the old one with. The vexation this caused her put an end to her hesitation with regard to the projected voyage to America, her indecision vanished at once, and she left Paris, on Friday the 27th of July, for London, determined, after fulfilling a short engagement there, to proceed to the States.

Hitherto she had constantly found some new excuse to delay signing the engagement with her brother Raphael, the projector and manager of this new expedition. A presentiment of evil seemed to have warned her against this last venture, and more than once she startled the expectant tribe of kindred by declaring she would not go. But the insolence of the Parisian public in daring to set up a new altar, in pre-

suming to *invent* a new Muse, deserved condign punishment, and nothing less than this prolonged absence was judged sufficiently severe.

On the 30th of July the *tragédienne* appeared in "Les Horaces" at St. James's theatre. The performance was honored with the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Aumale and the Duke and Duchess of Nemours, who applauded very warmly. The illustrious exiles were among the last of their countrymen who saw her on an European stage. The Duke of Aumale remarked to Mr. Mitchell, who saw him to his carriage, that "the beautiful language of Corneille, the language of his native land, had been to him like a refreshing dew after a burning summer's day."

On the 1st of August "Phèdre" was given; on the 3rd, "Adrienne Lecouvreur;" on the 4th, "Andromaque;" on the 6th, "Lady Tartuffe;" on the 8th, "Adrienne Lecouvreur." After this series of performances Mademoiselle Rachel consented to speak the dream in "Athalie," at an entertainment, given on the 9th, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, for the benefit of the French Benevolent Society.

## CHAPTER XI.

1855.

Departure for America—Passion for Cards and Affection for her Brother—An Ill-advised Expedition—Voyage across the Atlantic—Unpleasant Prediction—A Sad Augury—Our Past Errors pursue us through Life—A Stimulant to Learning—Spontaneous Generosity—"La Marseillaise" in the New World—A Slight Cold—Boston—Philadelphia.

IN London the resolution of the *tragédienne* had well nigh failed her completely. Her reception by the English audience, with whom she was always a great favorite, had this time been exceedingly brilliant. She knew how generous and how capable of appreciating her was the public she was forsaking, she had strong doubts of the one she was going to see. The millions that had appeared so sure in the distance, as the time for gathering them approached, seemed very problematical, and now most unwilling was she to undertake the distant expedition.

We have now reached one of the most important events in the career of Mademoiselle Rachel; its dire results hung like a funeral-pall over the remainder of her life, which it shortened and finally ended.

This ill-planned expedition, the subject of the most absurd and exaggerated reports, was altogether a financial speculation, in which art was even more than usually a secondary consideration. Rachel herself was but an instrument to advance the interests of others. Her whole family had conspired to bring about this grand *finale*, which was intended to make every member of it rich: the merit of its conception was due to the fertile imagination of Raphael. Inexperienced, hair-brained, full of chimerical illusions, the young Israelite imagined that the pockets of the citizens of the United States, mines richer and more inexhaustible than those of Peru, solely awaited the advent of his sister to yield up their ready-coined treasures. Even old Felix, who had hitherto manifested the most consummate skill and prudence in the management of his daughter's interests, was inoculated with this insane spirit of adventure, excusable in a man of thirty, but strange indeed in one of his age and experience. The contagious vertigo resembled

the fatal one of old which was the precursor of the ruin of the nation. In the present case it was the hitherto fortunate Rachel who was doomed to pay the penalty of the family error.

From the day the fascinating vision of the American *placer* took possession of their bewitched imagination, there was no peace for Rachel. Continually pointing to the golden mirage the demon of covetousness spread before them, they assailed her with constant solicitations. Raphael, Sarah, Dinah, Leah, incessantly dinned into her ears the 1,700,000frs. realised by Jenny Lind in thirty-eight nights. An estimate was made of the expenses and profits of the expedition; the latter were not to amount to less than 2,554,600fr. Of this sum Rachel was to receive 1,200,000fr. free of all expenses; her three sisters 170,000fr. each. As to Raphael, he was to have all he could make after paying expenses.

The least reflection, the least experience of men and things would have shown the weak points of this plan of campaign, and dispelled all illusions. But these children of Israel were so completely carried away, American dollars shone so brightly before their dazzled eyes, they could not perceive how little connection existed between the easy gains made in a foreign land by a



singer or a dancer and those made by a tragic actress.

Music, pantomime and dancing are universally understood and appreciated; they are at home wherever they go. A fine singer, a graceful dancer exert the same fascination on the audience whatever may be their nation. To understand them, no interpretation, no preliminary studies are required; their aim is the gratification of the eye and ear only.

It is far otherwise with the tragic actress, who, even in the country whose language she speaks, can only expect constant patronage from a certain class, the *elite* of society, for taste and education are needed to appreciate her art—she offers no entertainment that can please the masses long; with the crowd curiosity is the chief inducement, and that satisfied, the novelty once gone, the majority seek elsewhere amusements better adapted to their intelligence and associations.

Had Raphael read with discernment the newspaper articles which within the last ten years had most powerfully contributed to exalt and glorify his sister, he would have seen the organs of the press constantly complaining of the indifference shown by the French public for the masterpieces of their own language. Had he known anything of the

history of great dramatic artists he would have remembered that Talma, the great Talma himself, never, even when in the *apogée* of his fame, attained to the sum of the receipts of the houses brought by Madame Catalani and Madame Malibran. He would have learned that the art of the tragedian is a liberal art and not a money-making one, exercising its influence on the *élite* and not on the crowd. He may possibly have been led to form his conclusions by the enthusiasm always manifested for his sister in England. He did not consider that she found there a numerous and highly-educated aristocracy, that the gentry, in fact all the upper classes, are well acquainted with the French language and familiar with its great authors, that the distance between the two countries permitted of a constant interchange of ideas that rendered the appreciation of French dramatic literature and its interpreters easy.

He did not pause to reflect that in America, though education is far more widely disseminated, it is also more superficial; that this busy nation, while it astonishes the rest of the world by the gigantic advances it makes in all the mechanical arts, by its wonderful inventions in navigation, in agriculture, has had no time as yet to perfect itself in the arts that are less practically useful—no

leisure to cultivate the taste for things that to old Europe are necessities and to young America superfluities.

Had Raphael been guilty of two literary ideas his wild anticipations of success would have been somewhat tamed by the difference between the French classic drama and the English or Shakesperian, which is also that of the United States. That Madame Ristori should charm even those among the Parisians who were ignorant of her language is easily accounted for—the subjects of the tragedies she played were, for the most part, familiar to the French public—they were treated and developed in the same manner as their own tragedies; they, therefore, asked no more than the Italian actress could give them, and that they did not understand they knew intuitively.

It could not be thus in regard to Rachel in America; its citizens were accustomed to dramas in which the tragic and the comic elements, the sublime and the grotesque, the language of royalty and that of the lower classes are all combined and mingled. They do not, even in their own language, like to have that narrated and described that might be put into action before their own eyes. It was not probable that those accustomed to such scenic performances would be entertained by

French tragedies, tragedies of Greek and Latin origin, without any variety of scene or style, where the language, always sublime, never unbends, where the *dramatis personæ* never even change their buskins.

The above considerations are, *certes*, not far-fetched, and would have presented themselves to any thinking mind, and, had he reflected, would have dispelled some of the vapors that spread so thick a haze over the brain of Raphael Felix.

A last, and certainly not the least, important consideration, was one quite overlooked by the ambitious manager : he forgot, or did not choose to remember, that between him, the improvident and inexperienced youth, ignoring the language, the customs, and manners, the men and things, of the country he was going to put to contribution, and Barnum, the famous showman who exhibited Jenny Lind, and whose extraordinary tact, great experience, and well-combined measures in the way of puffs, trumpet-pealed announcements, &c., &c., had so largely influenced her success, there was an immeasurable distance.

From the moment this great project was conceived to that which witnessed its execution, nothing else was thought of, nothing else was cared for. We will not pause to speak of all the

attempts made by friends and admirers to dissuade the *tragédienne* from this suicidal design. It was whispered that inducements of considerable pecuniary value were tried in vain. Among these bits of private gossip, it was said that in accordance with a wish expressed by the *tragédienne* to possess a set of clasps to complete the superb *parure* of jewels she wore with the costume of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* the sum of 100,000frs. was offered on condition she would remain in France. This, though a paltry consideration when opposed to the potent one of the expected 1,200,000frs., was still too important to be slighted. The condition was accepted, the sum was sent—part of it was used for the purchase of the clasps, the remainder prudently added to the mass, and the *tragédienne* remained—the handsome bribe purchased a respite of six months.

It must be owned, however, that it was long before Rachel herself viewed the proposed emigration in the fair colors in which it was pictured by those who had an interest in her going. Such was her irresolution, that, to the very last moment, Raphael trembled lest she should give it up altogether. However, it was said that he had wisely provided against such an emergency and insured himself in more ways than one against any eventual

backsliding. Under color of losses at the Bourse he borrowed a sum to defray the expences of a preliminary voyage to America, undertaken to make the arrangements for her reception there. He afterwards obtained a second instalment for some other preparatory requisite, then again, another to advance the month's pay to the actors engaged, for the passage expences, &c., &c. When he had thus borrowed to the amount of 80 or 100,000frs. he felt more secure for his own share of compensation.

On the 11th of August all doubt was at an end, Rachel embarked in the Pacific. The countenance of the *tragédiennes* wore a heavy cloud; mute and thoughtful, she seemed to leave the shores of Europe with marked reluctance. It might be that the natural grief of parting with friends had thus saddened her; some of the members of the company suggested that she might be reflecting on M. Dumas' pleasant prediction that, "should Mademoiselle Rachel succumb to climate, fatigue or disease, like Mademoiselle Sontag, her brother Raphael would make the best of the misfortune by having her embalmed and exhibiting the body of Rachel to the Americans since he could not exhibit her alive."

Her very first day on board was marked by an incident that might well have inspired sad pre-

sentiments. One of the passengers, who was far gone in a consumption, died that afternoon. The body was put into a coffin and placed in one of the boats. For the first few days the presence of death cast a gloom on the passengers; for some time when walking on the deck they either avoided the side where the body hung in the little boat, or the laugh was hushed, the voice lowered to a whisper, the quick pace slackened as they passed by. But the impression of awe that produced this respect was soon effaced, and the merry chat, the light song and cheerful laugh were heard, as uncontrolled and free as though that sad momento of what was, is and will be, to the end of time itself, was no longer there. The mute eloquence of those lips doomed to eternal silence was soon unheeded by the thoughtless crowd, and the poor aunt of the youth was the only one whose countenance retained any trace of sadness.

During the passage Captain Nye presented to his celebrated passenger a superb mahogany box, filled with American perfumery, the gift of a citizen of New York, who wished to remain *incognito*. The gallantry of her unknown admirer did not, however, render the *tragédienne* more cheerful, and she finally chose to remain altogether in her cabin.

The day before the arrival of the Pacific she condescended, however, to make her appearance at the public table. This was the day of what is called the Captain's dinner, when champagne is supplied gratis, and toasts, speeches, and congratulations are made and exchanged. After the usual toasts to the Captain and to the ladies, some one proposed the health of Mademoiselle Rachel. So far there was nothing unusual or out of the way in the proceedings, but they did not end here. It occurred to some busy gentleman that the members of the French company would hail with delight an opportunity of singing the "Marseillaise"—probably he thought they were in the habit of singing it night and morning as some other people are supposed to say their prayers, and with like hopes of a happy result. His expectations were rather disappointed, for the astonishment of those thus unexpectedly called upon was great indeed. The honor was unanimously declined, for the very good reason that not one knew by heart the French national hymn.

No one seemed inclined to make a display of his musical powers, until a gentleman from New Orleans, having devoted himself, Curtius-like, for the good of all, volunteered, on condition the



burthen of the song should be taken up by all present. The reputation of the French company for patriotism was thus saved. As for the burthen it *was* taken up, and in such guise, that, whatever credit the singers deserved for good will, it was evident there was nothing to boast of in the way of harmony. It was plainly apparent they were nearing a land of liberty, for every man sent forth his voice in the most independent manner, perfectly free from all trammels of time or measure, and utterly careless of his neighbor's performance. At any rate the result was one that had not always been the case with the belligerent hymn—it ended not in tears and blood, but in hearty and prolonged merriment.

The close of the voyage was marked by the usual act of conventional generosity which custom has made a law for all artists of European celebrity, and which to neglect would be to peril the expected success. Mademoiselle Rachel remitted to the Captain two thousand francs to be distributed among the crew of the Pacific, and eight hundred francs for the Sailor's Orphan Asylum. Thinking this a favorable opportunity, one of the lady passengers requested the generous *artiste* would give a few scenes from Corneille

or Racine for the gratification of all the passengers. Rather surprised at a call for which her experience of English society had not prepared her, the *tragédienne* returned a very positive refusal.

At seven o'clock on the following morning Rachel and her companions landed on the shores of the Eldorado, on which so many hopes were founded. They were received by Mr. Gustave Naquet, the agent of Raphaël, who seemed rather annoyed than pleased that the Pacific should have got in so early. The cause was soon explained: preparations had been made to receive *Hermione* with all due honors; a steamboat was to have brought out her guards—the Lafayette company of militia, consisting of French citizens of New York—with a band of music playing French tunes, to meet the steamer and greet its celebrated passenger. A number of ladies and gentlemen had been invited to join the party. Great, therefore, was the disappointment when the Pacific, expected at ten o'clock, chose to anticipate the time by three hours and spoil this little nautical *fête*.

The *tragédienne*, however, seemed rather rejoiced at having escaped the threatened ovation, and congratulated herself on being permitted to

disembark quietly without the annoyance of a gaping crowd escorting her to her hotel. But she was not to be let off so easily ; no sooner had she laid her head on the pillow, tired, weary, and glad to think she was once more on *terra firma*, when the persevering Lafayette Guards congregated under her windows and commenced their serenade.

The victim was doomed—there was no help for it but to resign herself with as good a grace as might be to the infliction. She dressed herself and made her appearance on the balcony. Content with this submission, her tormentors finally permitted her to seek the rest she so greatly needed.

The St. Nicholas, with all its New World splendor, was not the place to suit one accustomed to the quiet comfort and retirement of an European hotel. The very next day found Rachel installed with her younger sisters, Leah and Dinah, in a private boarding-house in Clinton Place. Raphael and the father went to other lodgings, and Sarah chose to reside by herself in another quarter of the town. This division of the family gave rise to numerous conjectures as to the motives that led to it, as though some very potent one were needed for such a measure. The remainder of

the company took lodgings wherever it suited their means and convenience.

Preparations were now actively made for the great attack on the pockets of the American citizens, and the manager was soon exceedingly busy carrying out the operations of the siege at his office in Wall Street. A wonderful effect of the desire to make money manifested itself in the quickness with which Raphael made himself sufficiently master of the language of the country for all ordinary purposes. On his arrival he could say but a few sentences; in a few days he could not only understand all that was said, but make others understand him—*when he chose*. We say *when he chose*, for it did not always suit Raphael's purpose to be too clear. When Americans who spoke French well attempted to prove their proficiency in that language when applying for seats, or for any other purpose connected with the theatre, the prudent manager preferred replying in broken English, because, as he used to tell the actors, he could not be made responsible for anything he might be understood to promise—he was liable to make mistakes in a foreign tongue and to say one thing when he meant another. Thus he found means to evade keeping such engagements as turned out to be against his interests.

On the 3rd of September the *tragédienne* made her first appearance on the boards of the Metropolitan Theatre. The play that preceded the tragedy was "Les Droits de l'Homme," which, much as it was liked in Europe, scarcely pleased the majority of the audience, who, not understanding French, and having come expressly to see Rachel, thought the two acts of the comedy interminable. They had, however, to endure with what patience they possessed, the first act of "Les Horaces," before their curiosity could be satisfied. At length it was *Camille's* turn to come on, and she was greeted with three or four rounds of applause. To one who was accustomed to create an extraordinary sensation wherever she went, and who had been recalled twenty-two times in Vienna, the reception given her by the New-Yorkers seemed but lukewarm. She was, however, warmly applauded and recalled at the end—not of the tragedy, for it was not all acted—but of the *rôle*. The applause of the European *claque* being wholly unknown in the United States, the *bona-fide* expressions of approbation the real public there give is far more valuable, though, perhaps, less violent and prolonged than that of the hired Romans stationed under the lustre of a Parisian theatre.

This first performance produced 26,334fr., a sum exceeding any one ever made in a single night by any actor in Europe. But it was far below the brilliant expectations that had been founded on the success obtained by Jenny; as long as the singer's gains were the point of comparison, that which would have been thought a very handsome reward dwindled into insignificance. The Lind's first performance had brought nearly 100,000fr.

Notwithstanding Raphael's disappointment, he could not improve the situation of affairs; no after performance even attained as high a sum as this first one, and though it will be seen that every one yielded a much larger sum than he could have hoped to realise during a similar tour in any European country, it was nothing to those who had counted on fifty or sixty thousand francs every night.

On the 4th "Phèdre" was given, and another comedy; on the 6th, "Adrienne Lecouvreur." This drama was in America much preferred to any of the classic tragedies, and this was also the case in Europe wherever French was not the language of the country. For those not perfectly familiar with the literature of France the long speeches in the tragedies of Corneille and Racine must have

been exceedingly tiresome. Besides, there is nothing in these to please the eye; the eternal repetition of the same costumes—a few yards of flannel—and of the same decoration. The Greek palace with its two old red arm-chairs—must invest the whole thing in the eyes of foreigners with the most unendurable monotony; add to these drawbacks, the being obliged to follow the author in an execrable translation that has neither rhyme nor reason, that makes the most egregious nonsense of the most eloquent passages, and in which the sublime is grotesque, the pathetic ludicrous, then let the public consist of people who have been too busy money-making all their lives to have had time to study the demi-god passions of the Greek and Roman heroes, to have learned to appreciate the simple grandeur, the sculptural purity, the archaic severity of art, and what wonder that it should prefer the brilliant, high-colored melodrama “*Adrienne Lecouvreur*,” with its change of decoration at each act, its rich costumes. Mademoiselle Rachel and her sister Sarah might have followed the precedent set by Mademoiselle Georges, and had it announced on the bills that they “played with all their diamonds,” so dazzlingly were they adorned in “*Adrienne*.”

The pure lines, the still, statuesque beauty that

no grief, however violent, must alter, the stern dignity that would disdain to exhibit its agony in exaggerated contortions, the eternal serenity and heroic grace of the tragic muse could have no charms compared with those of the drama, her bastard sister, whose unbridled passions, nervous excitability and convulsive grief are more in accordance with the *blasé* taste of the day and delight those who have no time to analyse their sensations and distinguish truth from fiction.

During Mademoiselle Rachel's stay in New York the yellow fever was raging in Norfolk and Portsmouth with extraordinary violence. Public subscriptions were everywhere raised to remedy in some measure the misery and destitution that its ravages occasioned. M. Gustave Naquet having represented to the *tragédienne* that it was customary for the stars who levied large taxes on the land to show themselves munificent in such cases as the present, and that the mite she was to contribute must not be under a thousand dollars, she reluctantly consented to make this donation to the families of the victims. The capital thus employed not bringing in the immediate interests she had expected, for the Americans were too much accustomed to such acts to give them the importance she attached to her spontaneous gift, it was soon



regretted, and she reproached her adviser quite bitterly, saying :

“ Well, what good have my 5,000fr. done me ? Just money thrown away.”

In the meanwhile the ever-busy Lafayette Guards took it into their wise heads that Mademoiselle Rachel should sing them the “ Marseillaise.” They had no particular reason to give for the wish ; because she had sung it for the gratification of the Parisian populace of 1848 it did not follow that the citizens of New York should take any particular delight in it. The difference of time, place, people, opportunity were considerations totally overlooked by these exacting gentlemen. Perhaps they imagined the demand proved their nationality.

Whatever their motives, they would give the *tragédienne* no rest until she had consented to their whim. It must be owned that they had some little trouble in obtaining what they asked, Mademoiselle Rachel refusing at first on very good grounds. As an apology for her reluctance she sent the following letter, alleging inability, to her exacting countrymen. The letter was republished in France as a justification, inasmuch as it proved she had complied only after much hesitation ; but it scarcely accomplished the de-

sired object, Jules Janin insisting she should have said she "would not" instead of "she could not," she should have declined point-blank in lieu of pleading want of voice.

"DEAR COUNTRYMEN,

"It is seven years since I have sung the 'Marseillaise;' at the time I did sing it I had voice, and my health was still young. Now I am often exhausted after the play; I should, therefore, really fear to injure the interests of others should I increase my fatigues.

"You may believe in the deep regret I feel in not daring to promise what you desire of me, when I tell you I loved to sing the 'Marseillaise' as I love to act my finest part in Corneille.

"Believe me, dear countrymen, &c., &c.

"RACHEL.

"New York, September 8th, 1855."

But the Guards were not to be thus discouraged, and, finally, on the 28th of September, having, after the evening's performance, repaired to her residence and given her a serenade with accompaniment of vociferations for the "Marseillaise," they obtained a solemn promise from Raphael that the "Marseillaise" would very shortly constitute

a part of the evening's entertainment offered by Mademoiselle Rachel to the theatre-going public. As for singing it on a balcony for the gratification of a non-paying street audience, the *tragédienne* could never have been made to understand that such a thing was expected of her.

The announcement of this extra performance was, however, very injurious to the receipts of the intervening ones—people waited for the song-night.

It came at last; on the 8th of October the bills announced the longed-for "Marseillaise."

But in the interval that had elapsed between the promise and its realisation, a terrible blow had been struck at the foundation of the delicate constitution that required so much care and received so little. There was either a tendency from birth to pulmonary diseases or the seeds had been sown in early youth, when poverty entailed insufficient clothing and frequent exposure to the inclement weather. Rachel, when at the Conservatoire, had suffered from a complaint of the larynx that frequently ends in consumption. Now, however, the mischief, long dormant, was suddenly developed by negligence. A grand religious festival having occurred among the Hebrews of New York during her sojourn there, Rachel was invited. Ignorant of the treacherous

nature of the climate and its sudden vicissitudes, she had dressed herself in accordance with the mildness of the day. On her return home, however, there was a complete change, a sharp East wind prevailed, and the consequence was she caught a violent cold. From that moment her doom was sealed, for subsequent carelessness rooted the evil.

In the evening she went to a *soirée* at the house of M. de Tropicriand, the talented editor of the "Courier des Etats-Unis," to whom the French were indebted for very excellent articles on their performances. This second imprudence aggravated the mischief done in the morning.

On the night, then, that the "Marseillaise" was to be given, Rachel was ill-disposed to sing, but the audience had assembled chiefly for the purpose of hearing it, and she had no choice; as long as they saw she could act they took it for granted she could sing.

The effect of the "Marseillaise" in New York was nothing compared to that produced in 1848, and it could not be otherwise. In Paris the house was filled with an excited multitude, who heard and saw through the medium of their own feelings, and whom it required little exertion to raise to a pitch of enthusiasm that reacted more

or less on the actress: there was no such stimulant in America, where the hymn of "Rouget de l'Isle" could awake no dormant passions and, in fact, could have in itself no more real interest for the audience than any other song. Mademoiselle Rachel had never had any voice for singing, and still less ear; she could keep neither time nor tune; the orchestra of the Théâtre Français was aware of these deficiencies of *la grande tragédienne*, whom nature had never designed for a *cantatrice*, and when she chose to step out of her sphere it took care to supply them; she did not sing to the music, the music followed her *melopœia*, dissembled, covered the defective points, and not unfrequently anticipated and prevented too discordant ones. She and the orchestra were old acquaintances, and had practised the thing together often. But here she was in the presence of musicians who thought she knew how to sing, and therefore played according to rule, leaving her often at a distance, or finding her start on before; they performed a tune while she chaunted a sort of recitation without much of any. Add to this disadvantage that of a want of inclination, a cold on her chest, a cold audience, and the effect could scarcely be very exhilarating.

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The spectators gave her credit for her compliance if not for her skill, by applauding very courteously. The esteem in which they really held the performance was made apparent by the difference of the receipts when it was given the second time. On the first night it brought 21,299frs. When it was repeated, some days after, there was a decrease of over one-fourth in the receipts, which only amounted to 15,267frs.

The benefit of Mademoiselle Rachel proved attractive, and consequently remunerative, though she gave one of her worst plays, "Jeanne d'Arc." She again performed the "Marseillaise," and Madame Lagrange sung the grand air from "I Puritani." The result was 22,128frs.

Though much troubled with her cough, such was Rachel's impatience to finish her engagement in America, that she played four nights in succession. She had private reasons—*private* inasmuch as they did not concern the public at large, but not secret, for she did not hesitate to speak very openly on the subject—for her eagerness to return to France.

From New York the French Company went to Boston—not the best climate to cure coughs—and on the 23rd gave "Les Horaces." Mademoiselle Rachel continued to perform in succes-

sion on the 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th. The success obtained in Boston was far more brilliant, considering the numerical difference in the population than in New York.

At this juncture there was a little reaction, caused by an attempt to obtain higher prices for certain seats than those mentioned on the bills, and the rather cavalier way in which the press, so omnipotent in the United States, was treated by Raphael Felix. Whether the fault was really in the manager, or whether, as he asserted, it was attributable to outside speculators, with which he had nothing to do, the consequences fell on him, for though Mademoiselle Rachel appeared in two pieces on the same night—"Polyeucte" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie"—they brought only some 4,000fr. Satisfactory explanations having been given and the evils complained of remedied, the breach was healed, and the public restored its favor to the French company.

By a curious coincidence, while Mademoiselle Rachel was giving the "Adrienne Lecouvreur of Messrs. Scribe and Legouv   to the Bostonians, Miss Eliza Logan was, playing an apocryphal *Adrienne* in a play translated, or rather "Anglicised with variations," from the French

drama, and entitled "The Youth of Marshal Saxe."

On the 2nd of November the tragedy of "Virginie," and, "by request," the "Marseillaise," was given for the benefit of Mademoiselle Rachel, on which occasion many of the students of Cambridge wishing to obtain a better view of the *tragédienne*, came on the stage as supernumeraries. All the French in Boston, the majority of whom were workmen, were in the house that evening; of course the success of the "Marseillaise," was very great, that portion of the audience having some affinity with the public Mademoiselle Rachel had chaunted it to in 1848. This was her last night in Boston.



## CHAPTER XII.

1856.

Return to New York—Jules Janin in the Field Again—  
 Philadelphia—*Le Commencement de la Fin*—Little Family  
 Jars—Charleston—The Last Performance—Maurice—  
 Havana.

WHILE the *tragédienne* was electrifying all the French pretenders to ultra-Republicanism in the American cities, the news of this revival of by-gone mummeries had reached Paris and rekindled the wrath of her *quondam* admirer Jules Janin, who, in a very eloquent article, fulminated his anathema, not on the originators of the sin, but on those who were most innocent of it. He censured with more severity and spirit than strict justice the American nation as having asked for a revolutionary French hymn never perhaps thought of by them, and which was to the Frenchmen who did request it solely a reminiscence of their own land. His article, making all allowance for the exaggerations into which his anger hurried

him, was ably written, and annoyed Mademoiselle Rachel the more as, although full of praises of her, it spoke of her expedition as a complete failure.

On the 6th of November the French company again commenced its performances in New York. The first was "Adrienne Lecouvreur," followed, on the 8th, by "Lady Tartuffe," but the disadvantages of the house were such that the receipts were not over half the usual sums. The next performances were given at Niblo's little theatre, and proved more lucrative.

On the 17th Mademoiselle Rachel bade farewell to the New Yorkers in "Phèdre" and "Le Moineau de Lesbie." An ode, written for the occasion by M. de Trobriand, Rachel à l'Amerique, was recited by the *tragédienne* and received with hearty applause by the audience.

From New York the company proceeded to Philadelphia, where, in an evil hour, Mademoiselle Rachel made her appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, in "Les Horaces," on the 19th. The house had not been warmed! This piece of unpardonable neglect on the part of somebody was fatal to Mademoiselle Rachel, whose cough had continued from the day she caught cold in the synagogue. It was a cold November evening, and the atmosphere of the house, damp and raw, was

worse than that of the open street. Mademoiselle Rachel's hacking cough was painful to hear, and she looked wretchedly pale as she sat, wrapped up in her shawl, waiting in the slips her turn to come on. The result of this was, that she was unable to rise the next day, and remained ill during all the time she was in that town.

This was the commencement of Raphael's discomfiture. So far, if the reality had not equalled his wild expectations, it had consisted of such solid, substantial profits as would have satisfied any reasonable hopes. From New York his sister had already sent to France 300,000frs. of her gains—including her London receipts—and he himself 60,000frs. The few drawbacks that had occurred had proceeded from his own mismanagement. In his eagerness to make money rapidly, he had curtailed the privileges of the press, infringed the laws and customs of the country he was in, quarrelled with his agent, and, on the whole, proved himself but an indifferent showman. Besides these outside troubles there were little domestic jars, inevitable in a family where the tempers were so various and some of them so violent, and where the several members had become accustomed to a perfectly independent and uncontrolled life.

It was more especially between Raphael and Sarah that dissensions were wont to arise, but although a furious quarrel would at times spring up from the most insignificant causes, it seldom lasted. On one occasion some little misunderstanding having occurred during a rehearsal, there was a terrible falling out between them, the brother entrenching himself behind his authority as manager, and the sister setting it at nought in the most defiant manner. Sarah knew no bounds when in a passion, and her language was then more apt to savor of her earlier career than was quite befitting her present position, nor were the ears of her adversaries always safe from substantial buffets as well as angry words. After a very violent interchange of epithets, neither fraternal nor complimentary, during which the manager maintained himself at a respectful distance from his refractory actress, she declared she would tear up her engagement, to which the reply was that nothing could give him greater pleasure. Accordingly the document was sent back in a dozen pieces. No one seemed to think the country was in danger, or that the interest of the French company would be severely damaged by the loss of the retiring member. Raphael was exultant, and Rachel in a state of great hope that Sarah would

fulfil her threat and take herself back to Europe; at the same time she was in great perplexity, for she dared not say she wished her off, lest Sarah should stay to spite her, nor could she venture to tell her to stay lest she should allow herself to be advised. When Sarah, therefore, came in hot haste to make her complaints, she took a middle course, condoled with her griefs, said it was too bad—there was no living with Raphael—concluding with:

“At any rate, dear, you shall not go penniless; I’ll let you have six thousand francs to help you to return, &c., &c.”

Meanwhile “Lady Tartuffe” was to be performed the next night, and of course Sarah, who played the Countess, was out of the question. Raphael, too, in the heat of the quarrel would not change the announcement, counting on Mademoiselle Durey, a very intelligent actress, who had played the part often, in the most able manner, when with Rachel on other tours. Mademoiselle Durey replied she was ready to play the part, but that, her salary not permitting her to own so expensive a wardrobe as Mademoiselle Sarah, she had no dress befitting the occasion. Anxious to prove to the delinquent how well he could get along without her, Raphael offered, if the dress

ment of Rose, Sarah, who was present, took the matter up so hotly on the opposite side that Dinah could not play for a day or two after in consequence of the impression her sister's arguments had made on her face.

All these little bickerings, however, though frequent, did not interfere with the general prosperity of the French company. Everyone but the Felixes was satisfied with the prospect of continued success. In a letter from one of the members to a friend in Paris, we find the following under date of October 29th.

"We are playing every day. I am obliged to own I fear we shall see you again too soon; the success of our *grande tragédienne* is such I really think she will make her 1,200,400frs. before the nine months are elapsed."

In another, dated the 14th of November, the same correspondent remarks:

"They say in Paris we make no money. We do not realise 30,000frs. a-night, but Mademoiselle Rachel has already remitted to France 300,000frs. including the last receipts of the London performances. She has come to the United States very reluctantly, for, as she says herself, she loves for the first time, and she has only resigned herself to the sacrifice she makes in leaving France for the

*sake of her family.* Let us hope this feeling will preponderate over the first, and that we shall not see France again before next June."

The state of Rachel's health precluding her from re-appearing before the Philadelphians and the physicians having advised an immediate removal to a warmer climate, the company gave four performances without her. English plays were performed on the same evenings by the English company, but the plan met with so little favor that the receipts did not amount to a thousand francs a-night. The house had been rented for ten performances, and had to be paid in any case. The same thing occurred with regard to all the theatres that had been engaged before-hand, and the amount thus spent did not average less than 20,000frs. for the cities of the United States and 50,000frs. for the Havana theatre.

It was during Mademoiselle Rachel's forced seclusion in Philadelphia that the report of her death, with the most circumstantial account of her last moments, went the rounds of the American papers, and finally travelled to Europe, where it was republished in all its most minute details. When the subject of this wretched joke heard of it she was more amused than vexed.

It was finally decided that the company should

go at once to Charleston. Much was hoped from the climate there, but Rachel herself would have willingly returned immediately to France. With her this was now the ruling passion, and it was more than once feared she would start by the next steamer, and leave her brother to settle his affairs as he chose.

On the 27th, Mademoiselle Rachel, her father, and her sister Sarah, anticipating by a few hours the departure of the other members of the company, left Philadelphia. The invalid travelled by shorter stages, so that although she had preceded her companions, she arrived after them. The first performance, consisting, as usual when she did not play, of comedies, was given without her on the 10th of December, and was not very numerously attended. It was everywhere the same, the attraction was Rachel; they wished to see the idol Europe had so long worshipped, not a French play they could not understand. As for Raphael, convinced that the health of his sister would now be completely restored, he took this opportunity to go on to Havana and make the necessary arrangements for her reception there.

There was in Charleston a French doctor, whose skill was highly spoken of; he was sent for



by Mademoiselle Rachel, and his only advice was that she should maintain herself in a state of absolute repose for six months. This was the only thing she needed, but it was a *sine qua non* condition of health. This, however, the patient rejected as an utter impossibility. Her cough continued very troublesome, but her strength and general health being slightly improved she was bent on performing, and her re-appearance was announced to take place on the 17th instant in the part of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.

This doctor was probably the first person who really saw the danger in which the *tragédienne* stood even then. Her illness was spoken of as an affection of the larynx, but the lungs were attacked already, and the utmost care and prudence was required, but when she had resolved on anything it was not easy to dissuade her from it. Play she would, and play she did—for the last time in America the bills said—for the last time on earth! said implacable Destiny.

M. Chery, who played in the drama the part of *Michonnet*, the noble old stage-manager, was greatly shocked by the change he saw in the once-brilliant *Adrienne*. A niece of his had died of the fatal disease, the symptoms of which he clearly recognised in Rachel. The last scene of

the play contains passages but too allusive to the doom she has since so cruelly realised.

“ Ah, quelles souffrances . . . ce n'est plus ma tête, c'est ma poitrine qui est brulante . . . j'ai là comme un brazier . . . comme un feu dévorant qui me consume—

“ Ah ! le mal redouble. . . Vous qui m'aimez tant, sauvez moi, secourez moi . . . je ne veux pas mourir ! . . . à présent je ne veux pas mourir—

“ Mon. Dieu ! exaucez moi ! . . Mon. Dieu ! laissez moi vivre . . quelque jours encore . . . Je suis si jeune et la vie s'ouvrirait pour moi si belle !

“ La vie ! . . la vie ! . . Vains efforts ! . . vaine prière ! . . mes jours sont comptes !—je sens les forces et l'existence qui m'échappent !

“ O triomphes du théâtre ! mon cœur ne battra plus de vos ardentes émotions ! . . Et vous, longues études d'un art que j'aimais tant, rien ne restera de vous après moi . . Rien ne nous survit à nous autres . . rien que le souvenir.”

Hearing her utter with all the eloquence of truth these heart-rending phrases, in which the dying actress clings so despairingly to the life ebbing away so rapidly, these passionate regrets

of the triumphs of a career cut short so early, M. Chery was deeply impressed with the imminence of the peril. He could not divest himself of the terrible thought that the death she was imitating was really in her, mocking the mocker!

“ We have seen Rachel act for the last time,” said he, to a friend.

When Raphael went to Havana on the 4th, he wished to take Maurice with him. Maurice was a fine young man with whom he had become acquainted on board the Pacific, when he made his preparatory trip to America. Pleased with this youth's manners and address, Raphael had brought him back to France, and he now filled the post of ticket-taker and interpreter in the company. An indisposition, which afterwards proved to be the small-pox, prevented his accompanying the manager to Havana. On the ninth day the poor fellow died.

Everyone regretted Maurice, he was so obliging and kind; as for Mademoiselle Rachel she liked him very much, and had promised to establish him in some sort of business before the end of the *cong  *. His death was therefore carefully concealed from her, lest it should cause too great an impression in her weak state, and on leaving

Charleston she wrote to him who was past all earthly joys and sorrows.

The letter concluded with these words :

“ Adieu, my dear Maurice ; I am firmly convinced we shall soon meet again.”

The incident is related by Mademoiselle Durey in the correspondence already referred to.

“ Her father, Mademoiselle Briard, and I, had dined with her that evening, and she read us the letter she was writing to comfort poor Maurice whom we have to leave behind us, she said ; the last lines of it sent a chill to our hearts. We could not help thinking they were prophetic of the writer's own approaching death.”

The news of Raphael's progress in Havana being of the most exhilarating nature, the company embarked on the 19th instant for that city. The Havaneros, too enthusiastic with regard to the fine arts, not to be electrified at the idea of possessing in their own town the *grande tragédienne*, had subscribed *en masse*. There could not be a doubt that the greatest success would attend her if she performed ; unfortunately the last point was very uncertain. It was hoped, however, that when she had recovered from the fatigues of the voyage, she would improve.

Every physician that was called in agreed in

saying that rest was indispensable. If climate could be of any avail she certainly had the benefit of the mildest winter quarters in the world, yet she did not seem to get better, and the period of her announced appearance was indefinitely adjourned.

This state of things was extremely annoying to the hapless manager, who saw before him a wretched prospect—the idea of having to refund all the bright dubloons and fair dollars that had passed into his possession was cruel indeed.

As for the Havaneros, their impatience soon made them irritable, and they declared their utter disbelief in the alleged cause of delay. That Rachel could not play for them when they knew she had played a few days previous in Charleston—the thing was absurd, and all the blame was laid to caprice. By way of revenge, one of the leading papers “*La Preusa*,” commenced the publication of M. Mirecourt’s biography of Rachel, translated into Spanish, to the infinite vexation of the *tragédienne*.

Nor were the Havaneros alone to deem themselves fooled. Unfortunately Rachel had so much accustomed all who knew her to feigned indispositions during the course of her theatrical career, whenever it suited her convenience, that now the

members of the company could not be brought to believe her as ill as she really was. Her own family long doubted the serious nature of her illness. Knowing how interested her relatives were in her health for their own sakes, she had sometimes, in France, frightened her mother by complaining of just the kind of symptoms she knew to be those of consumption. Even when subsequently she was sent to reside in Egypt, few in France believed her ill. She paid the penalty of former deceptions.

The first performance was to have been given on the 25th December; it was postponed to the 6th January, her physician having peremptorily required the delay. The *tragédienne* herself was exceedingly disappointed; while the public murmured and her companions accused her, she was suffering acutely in mind and body. She removed to a house belonging to M. Marty, the manager of the Havana theatre, and secluding herself entirely refused to see even her relatives, on whom she laid the blame of having brought her from France on this injudicious expedition. She declared that all the company should leave for Europe, and that she would remain behind, keeping only Mademoiselles Briard and Durey, and her faithful old Rose. It was her intention, as soon as she got

better, to perform detached scenes in which she meant the two actresses should assist her. She would have none of her relatives remain with her; they must all go back to France.

This misanthropic fit lasted ten days, during which the two ladies mentioned were alone admitted to see her. At last she allowed herself to be persuaded that her wisest course would be to return to Paris, where she could have every resource of medical art; it was agreed that everyone, excepting Rachel, was to sail for New York on the 8th of January, and thence for Europe, on the 19th.

When this decision was announced great was the disappointment of the actors, and with good reason, for, from the day the notice was given, all salaries ceased. Mademoiselles Durey and Briard, acting upon the idea Mademoiselle Rachel's proposal had suggested, resolved to remain and try their fortunes there since they were so far from home. Having mentioned this to Rachel, she highly approved of their plan, and promised her support.

"Go to New York," said she, "I will pay your expenses thither; my brother must give you the amount of your fare back to Europe; that sum will enable you to live until you can carry out

your plan. You will have letters of credit and recommendation from me to use in case of failure. Write me all particulars, you will always find me ready to assist you; you are the only disinterested friends I have met with in my life." She cautioned them not to mention to their companions her good intentions.

When the two adventurous ladies went to Raphael for their passage-money there was quite a commotion among the other members of the company.

"What were they going to do in America?"

"Going to act, of course."

The example was contagious, all would stay; the next day half had repented—then again, only four would remain—on the eve of sailing there were but the two proposers of the scheme and the hair-dresser still firm in the resolve, and on the 8th, when the vessel left, the two ladies only embarked, steadfastly resisting all efforts made to dissuade them.

The real motive for the apparent fickleness of the other actors was the opposition their plan met with from Raphael. When the Havaneros found they were not to hear Rachel, they expressed a wish to see at least the other members of the company, and the latter, nothing loth, as they



were no longer receiving a salary, proposed giving a series of performances without the co-operation of the *tragédienne*. The manager, who intended returning the following year at the head of a company, fearing that the novelty would be over if the present scheme took effect, refused to permit of it.

At first there was a strong tendency to resistance; they would remain and give a series of pieces in three acts, requiring seven performers at most. The far-off yellow fever at last conquered, and they thought they had better not lose their passage-money.

Rachel had at first announced her resolution to remain. On the eve of the day her comrades were to leave she had changed her mind, and was going also. The next day she had again altered it, and would remain. The Clyde finally sailed without her.

The ladies already mentioned were not the only ones who remained in America. Sarah Felix left in the Isabel for Charleston, on the morning the Clyde sailed for New York; she did not return to Europe for some time.

Rachel had taken it into her head she would return to Europe in the same vessel that brought her out, the ill-fated Pacific that was then ex-

pected in New York, but which was never heard of. It was not until the 28th of January, 1856, that she returned to France.

Thus ended this disastrous trip—disastrous, be it understood, with regard to its results on the health of the *tragédienne*, but not, all things considered, in a pecuniary view. The fact that the forty-two performances given by Mademoiselle Rachel produced a sum total of 684,033fr.—her share alone amounting to 298,000fr.—sufficiently proves that the citizens of the United States paid their tribute to dramatic art with more liberality than any other nation, and that they were far from deserving the violent diatribe fulminated against them by M. Jules Janin in his *feuilleton* entitled “Rachel and Tragedy in the United States.”

However, the best answer the Americans can make is to be found in the still more virulent reproaches the same critic had addressed to his own countrymen on the subject of classic art on a former occasion, when a fit of spleen or of gout had soured his temper.

## CHAPTER XIII.

1856.

Meulan—Hotel Rachel—Household Gods put up at Auction—  
Value set upon *Souvenirs*—Ingenious Cicerones—A Mother's Letter—Dear-Bought Absence—Washington's Grandson—A New Claim on the Théâtre Français—Return from Egypt—Sojourn in Montpellier—Rachel's Children.

WE have now before us the melancholy task of narrating the last two years of a life hitherto so agitated, so brilliant and so busy, but which was now drawing to its close in obscurity and pain—two years, during which alternations of hope and fear incidental to the deceptive nature of her disease, and the anxieties of a mother who anticipates the day when her children will be left to the care and protection of comparative strangers, had succeeded to the intoxicating triumphs that had hitherto marked her days.

From the day she set foot on the continent Rachel had but one thought, one desire, one aim

—life! Her time was spent in vain struggles to dislodge the enemy that had gained possession of the very stronghold of vitality, in disputing every breath to the heavy hand that was oppressing the weak chest; one day lulled into security by some favorable symptom, the next feeling herself within the shadow of the tomb, yet, in truth, nearing with hourly-increased rapidity the fatal goal. For twenty-two months, and until within a few days—we might say hours—of her death, she continued to hope against every probability.

And yet the recollection of the fate of Rebecca, whose illness she had studied in all its phases, might well have discouraged her from the first moment she perceived in herself the same fatal symptoms.

She spent the spring of this year, 1856, at a friend's residence in Meulan, but, on the approach of Autumn, in pursuance of the advice of the physicians, she resolved to pass the winter on the Nile.

It was reported on this occasion that the *tragédienne*, disgusted with the enthusiasm manifested for Madame Ristori, never intended returning to France. The announcement that her town residence was for sale, which was published shortly after her departure, seemed to confirm this resolution of

perpetual exile. A *few* words on this hotel, of which such marvels were related may not be amiss here. On the announcement of the sale the French periodicals were seized with a sudden frenzy of admiration, grief, enthusiasm, and despair. All that could be said on the immense loss Paris was about to sustain in the person of the owner, and on the immense value of the dwelling and its contents, was exhausted. Those who thus took on themselves the *rôle* of auctioneers, to puff and cry up the goods and chattels of the *tragédienne*, seemed to wish to show the world how low their venal adulation could stoop. But the result was only partially attained. All Paris hastened to satisfy the curiosity excited by the pompous descriptions of the improvised Robinses, and all Paris was disappointed. The domestic curiosity-shop was pronounced to be such a collection as might be found equalled by the contents of almost any well-appointed private dwelling; and the temple itself a tasteless, common-place affair, more remarkable for defects than beauties.

The Hotel Rachel, situated on the street to which the *echerîn* Trudon gave his not very euphonious name, cannot boast of the prospect its windows command. On one side they overlook a large boarding-school, on the other the garden of

M. Mires. The present building was erected at Mademoiselle Rachel's desire by Charles Duval, the architect who has since constructed the celebrated *Grand Café Parisien*. The defects already referred to were inevitable where so serious a difficulty as that of want of space existed; he was desired to place an elegant and comfortable mansion on a surface of little over 200 yards. The plans had been approved of by Mademoiselle Rachel on the eve of one of her *congés*, and the price having been fixed at 60,000fr., she left him to execute them. Her tour that year proving very productive, she wrote to the friend to whom she had left the charge of overlooking progress, and authorised any additional expense the architect might deem necessary; the consequence was the 60,000fr. swelled into 200,000fr., a price no one would think of giving for the residence.

The house that had originally stood on this site was of much more simple aspect; Mademoiselle Rachel had occupied it when she removed from No. 10, rue de Rivoli, celebrated as having been the residence of Mademoiselle Mars before she occupied her own hotel, rue Sarcoufoucault. The predilection of Mademoiselle Rachel for this spot arose from her son, Alexander, having been born there, and though it had only been intended

for a temporary residence, she chose to remain there against the advice of her friends, who suggested the Champs Elysées as far preferable.

The present building consists in a ground-floor, an *entresol*, a first-floor, and attics, and the whole presents a singular confusion of all the different styles in architecture. The ground-floor or *rez de chaussée*, is divided into a vestibule, a porter's lodge, and a little parlor, where admirers not admitted to see the divinity of the temple inscribed their names. The architect was so cramped for room that he put the stables in the cellar. Up a Gothic-arched staircase, as dark as a pocket, and so narrow there is no room for a moderate-sized crinoline, the benighted visitor gropes his way to the *entresol*, and here the suite of rooms commences.

An insignificant ante-chamber leads into a dining-room, ornamented and furnished in very questionable taste. The intention was that the Etruscan should have prevailed, but it was never carried out. The heterogeneous articles it contained were severally meant to denote archaism and erudition, but seemed rather astonished at being brought together. A wainscot of the middle ages looked down upon a modern carpet; Greco-Roman paintings and Renaissance *bahuts*,

Etruscan vases and Parisian crystals, were uncere-  
moniously associated. The whole was lighted up  
by an odd-looking lamp, of no particular age, style  
or beauty. The room itself was a sort of narrow  
passage, with so low a ceiling that a man of ordi-  
nary height was inclined to stoop as he entered.

On the other side of the ante-chamber a door led  
into a small *salon* hung in chintz. Among other  
things it contained a glass-doored piece of furniture  
filled with knick-knacks, in which large sums had  
been invested; every rarity had been collected in  
this toy-receptacle; Lilliputian statuettes, diminu-  
tive Chinese monsters and costly fancies of all  
sorts were there. Yet, with exception of a small  
marble bust of the First Consul, chiselled by  
Canova, there was not an article in the room that  
indicated a taste for the truly beautiful.

The library adjoining the *salon*, is—as might be  
expected—the smallest room in the house. The  
oak-panels, wainscot, &c., are finely carved, but  
the books, splendidly bound, and each in its place,  
looking as if it had never been read, gave the room  
a cold aspect.

On the first-floor are the reception-rooms and  
bed-chambers.

Two muses—Molpomene and Thalia, exiled in  
the ante-chamber, seemed to protest against the



ungratefulness of the mistress who forgot that without them she never would have had a *salon*. Some excuse for her might have been found in the little artistic ~~beauty of these~~ representatives of tragedy and comedy.

The Louis XIV. *salon* was gorgeous and costly—and that was all that could be said in its praise. The curtains were of embroidered cashmere. The chairs and sofas, richly carved and gilt, were covered with crimson silk damask. Each piece bore, carved in a shield, the initial R; though there were a number of pieces, the set sold for only 2,100fr.—not over half its value. The pannels and wainscot were highly gilded. The clock and six candelabra, though masterpieces of Denière's, only brought 4,500fr. Nothing in this room, so magnificently furnished, spoke of the inner life of the woman—nothing bore the impress of the *artiste*; the upholsterer had worked busily and lavishly, and the furniture was such as might have been ordered by any rich stockbroker. Nothing wore the stamp of an exceptional and privileged being. There was not a bronze, not a marble, not a picture of any value.

Between the *salon* and the bed-rooms was the so-called Chinese boudoir, a closet some six feet square, and so dark that until the eye became

familiarised with its gloom, it could discern nothing. The scant light admitted through the ceiling was lessened by stained glass that was not at all Chinese. The ornaments of this dark closet were four or five Chinese figures and a Pekin lantern. Among these grotesque mandarins was placed—how appropriately the reader may imagine—a portrait of Rebecca, a lock of her hair in a black frame, and a fine marble bust of Christ, around the throat of which was wound the rosary that has already been mentioned.

The best bed-chamber was also magnificently gilded. The furniture was Louis XV. and of rosewood, with medallions of Sevres. The superb bed, in *marqueterie*, adorned with gilt bronze ornaments, the owner had slept in but seldom. It was sold for 1000fr.

In one of the rooms hung the portraits of old Madame Felix and her husband, looking as though they were making an estimate of what the box of toys would bring.

As this is not an auctioneer's catalogue we shall omit the rooms held of less importance—one of the latter, however, would have been well worth a chapter to itself could the history of its contents be faithfully recorded. This was Rose's room.

In the vestibule of the Théâtre Français there

is always a bust of the reigning power. When a revolution brings about a change, the dethroned majesty is hurried up into the attic, and its place is filled by the image of the new idol. The old busts are not disposed of or destroyed, they are merely kept out of sight—there is no knowing what may happen—and in case of a restoration it might be economical and handy to have the old image of all ready.

It was probably with this example before her eyes, and in accordance with the same principle, that the busts and portraits of intimate friends, after having had their day in the most conspicuous and honorable place in the *tragédienne's* elegant rooms, afterwards ascended to the maid's dormitory. Rose had, at last, quite a gallery of which the history might have afforded us a glance into the hidden recesses of the feminine heart.

The hotel was to have been sold on the 25th of November, 1856, but, at the eleventh hour, M. Emile de Girardin, to whom Rachel had delegated her powers, countermanded it. The numerous puffs had not had the success expected, and as the little excitement manifested by the public made it probable no very liberal offers would be made, the speculation was given up for the time. A sale of a portion of the furniture took place in July,

1857, at very low prices. The remainder of the furniture was removed to the apartment Mademoiselle Rachel had taken, Place Royale.

Among the articles sold for much less than their real value were some fine paintings. An authentic Boucher (*La Toilettte*) went for 200fr. "L'Ecu de France," an original of Eugène Isabey, brought but 660fr. The "Trial of Mary Stuart," a fine composition by Achille Deveria was given for 705fr. Two real Diaz, presented by M. Arsène Houssaye to the *tragédienne*, were actually allowed to go for 360fr. Two fine paintings representing "Music and Comedy," by Natlier, only brought 600fr.

A "Virgin and Child" in water-colors, after Van Dyck, by Madame O'Connel, that had cost M. le Comte Leopold Lehon 800fr., sold for only 350fr.; "Le Triomphe de Mademoiselle Duclos," by Rigaud, 150fr. only.

Among the works of art was an exquisite portrait of Adrienne Lecouvreur, in Beauvais tapestry, a most excellent imitation of a fine painting, and which had been a great favorite with the *tragédienne*—yet she allowed of its being sold for 150fr. Certainly the possessor of millions could know nothing of that peremptory need that brings under the hammer the most

valued articles, yet these fine pictures, all presents from those who were or had been friends, were allowed to go for prices infinitely below their value, as though the owner found herself reduced to the utmost penury.

When the hotel of the rue Trudon was built, some ten years ago, the next thing was to furnish it suitably. *Hermione* said to her friends:

“Contribute something to the adorning of my little hotel—a trifle, a *souvenir*.”

Every one hastened to prove his taste or his liberality; one sent a china vase, another a *statuette*, another a painting, &c., &c.

Had these friends chosen they might have bought back their valued and valuable *souvenirs* at public auction. These various contributions were estimated at 300,000fr.

When the hotel was first announced for sale, several hundreds of persons daily visited it. Those who manifested the greatest curiosity to see the inmost recesses of the muse's private dwelling were foreigners, who were not aware that tickets to view were to be had on application to M. Lemonnyer, the notary. Some ingenious speculator having procured a number of these tickets, repaired to the hotels most frequented by strangers, and offered them at prices, varying according to the

dupc, from 2fr. to 20fr., at the same time volunteering his services as *cicerone*. An American was firmly convinced he had seen the portraits of Talma and Mademoiselle Mars, painted by David—the likeness of Father and Mother Felix having been dubbed with these illustrious names by his guide. Another enthusiastic gentleman offered an additional louis to be allowed a sight of the historical guitar.

Mademoiselle Rachel had left France on her way to Egypt on the 2nd of October. The following letter to her son, dated from Cairo, the 18th of the same month, is interesting, not only from the maternal feeling that dictated it, but also from the particulars it contains.

“DEAR LITTLE ONE,

“MY health seems improving, for I have already acquired some strength, and my appetite is tolerably good. I am settled as comfortably here as it is possible to be in Egypt. There are in Cairo two hotels, and I am in the best. The bedroom, which has a southern aspect, is as large as one of your school *dortoirs*, with a ceiling proportionally high, so that, although it is very warm here, there is no lack of air. The table is very good. The cook, who is a Frenchwoman, in con-

sideration of our being countrywomen, gets up little extra-nice dishes for us. I have already taken short walks in the town and in the environs; it is a very rich, curious, and interesting country. I hope you will some day visit it and that God will permit me to be your *circerone*; that is, your faithful guide.

"More than ever do I congratulate myself of being a *gr-r-r-rande tragédienne*. Everyone we meet is ready to oblige, to serve, and to procure us amusements; ever since I left Marseilles I have everywhere met with the most maternal hospitality.

"Your aunt\* is very well: she laughs, she sings, she would dance to make me smile, and that is not always easy, for I am often thinking that I am far from my dear little ones. It is true that I find some comfort in the thought that I am a voluntary exile for a few months in order that I may return to my children strong and healthy, to leave them no more.

"I have just made an effort to write you so long a letter, for writing fatigues and agitates me—two things strictly prohibited by the physicians. I can, therefore, write to no one else by this mail.

\* Mademoiselle Sarah.

"I hope you will prove your gratit writing me a long letter. Tell me a thoughts, and all the news, if you know of we can get no papers here.

"I shall write to my dear parents by boat. There was an earthquake in Al while we were there. There was no har but it made a great impression upon me. sublime horror. In Cairo there were accidents. I must now bid you good bye ing a thousand kisses."

This letter is charming, from its simpli was evidently written by the mother and bears no resemblance to those wri her by her too numerous secretaries.

We have also in the above epistle amiable and doubtless correct picture of endeavors to cheer her invalid sister. M tell-tales have asserted that this *entente* did not last long, and that the absence kind laughing, singing sister, soon bec most ardent wish of the *tragédienne*. of this, the following little anecdote w rounds. We give it as we find it in or periodicals of that day, without at all wa its authenticity :

"Sad news from our great *tragédies*



suffers from two evils—bronchitis and her sister Sarah. Deeming the immediate removal of the greater evil might ameliorate her condition and afford her a better chance for future relief from both, she expressed a wish that Mademoiselle Sarah would go to Paris in order to make some purchases there. Her motive was understood:

“‘I’ll ne’er forsake thee,’ was the reply of the devoted tyrant—‘unless I get 20,000fr. to comfort me under the affliction the separation will cause me.’

“ Rachel thought the grief might be assuaged with less—Sarah was inflexible.

“‘Haven’t I forsaken America—refused a splendid engagement! Was I not to have married a youth, handsome, wealthy, of noble birth, a descendant of Washington, who was to have acted the *Crispius* at the Odeon! All these have I slighted for thy sake—sure 20,000fr. were but poor compensation for the sacrifice of such advantages!’

“‘You’re killing me,’ cried poor Rachel, ‘take 15,000fr.’

“‘20,000fr. or dea-a-a-ath,’ sternly replies Sarah. The result is not yet known.”

Sarah’s temper was too irritable to qualify her for a companion to an invalid, and she was not

perhaps able to keep that curb upon it long which immediate danger had rendered necessary. Symptoms of returning health in one sister brought symptoms of returning violence in the other.

Numerous were the anecdotes for which the well-known peculiarities of Rachel's elder sister afforded some foundation. It is not likely that the purveyors of the daily press were very scrupulous as to the veracity of the sayings and doings they recorded of Mademoiselle Sarah. They probably often made their readers merry at her expense with stories entirely of their own invention. Her short sojourn in America after the departure of the other members of the company furnished matter for innumerable absurd reports, among which that of the approaching nuptials with the *descendant of Washington* was not the least laughable, being, moreover, firmly believed by many envious of the bride's good luck.

Though apparently exclusively pre-occupied with the care of her health she could not quite forget that of her pecuniary interests. She remembered that as a *sociétaire* of the Théâtre Français she was entitled to her full salary during her illness just as much as when in active service, and she wrote to prefer her claim. The demand was preposterous, and had it been put forward by

anyone else would have been laughed at. But the committee was accustomed to the exactions of this despotic queen, and knew, moreover, that their own deliberation was a mere matter of form, she placed no dependance on the issue if left to their decision; she had more faith in her influence in higher quarters than with the comrades whom the grant of her claim would despoil of their earnings to defray her expenses while idle.

The salary of a *sociétaire* amounted to 12,000fr. yearly. Mademoiselle Rachel received 42,000fr. for nine months, during which, indeed, she seldom averaged over three of actual service—and this large sum was allotted her in consideration of the superiority of her talent and of its favorable influence on the receipts of the house. This influence, however, could not be alleged to be exercised during her sojourn in her *congé* on the Nile.

The plea of past services was also subject to discussion. She had undoubtedly done good service to the cause of art, but that she had, as she asserted, made the fortune of the theatre, was contradicted by the unanswerable eloquence of figures. The ten performances given by her in one month produced some 40,000fr.—but on the

other hand, she entailed numberless expenses and disadvantages on the theatre, the exclusive attention of the public being wholly engrossed by the great *artiste*, reacted wofully on the nights she did not play; everything that was not connected with her was looked upon with little favor, a natural result of this was the discouragement of every other representative of tragic art; the confusion and dissensions her despotism occasioned in the management, her capricious *entrées* and *sorties*; her brother, her sisters, forced on the committee; her lawsuits, her free boxes and seats, her dressing-room, her costumes, were heavy charges to be deducted from the benefits, and somewhat counter-balanced the receipts her presence brought into the treasury.

Mademoiselle Rachel returned to France at the end of May, 1857.

On board the steamer that was bringing her from Egypt there was a missionary bishop, Monseigneur Guillamum, with whom she frequently conversed. Rachel had at all times the most fascinating, winning manners, and now, to a man of that sacred character, the shadow of death within which he saw her stand, must have invested her with a deeper interest.

When the boat stopped at Malta, the prelate

took the opportunity to say mass in the church of St. John, in behalf of her who was on the brink of eternity. The object of his solicitude having known of his pious intention, repaired to the church and heard him officiate.

In his conversations the prelate anxiously exhorted her to alter her course, and, instead of re-entering France, to proceed to Rome and be baptized by the Holy Father. To this she objected, on the score of not being prepared to become a convert: "besides," said she, after a few moments' hesitation, "people would say I was playing a part, and that it was done for effect,—I cannot."

She spent a part of the summer in the environs of Montpellier. While there it is probable that her thoughts recurred more than once to the poor recluse whom she had visited in the prison of that city ten years before, and whose impending fate she had then so eloquently lamented. She, too, the once gay and brilliant favorite of fortune whom the sad, proud captive had probably then gazed upon with envy as well as admiration, was herself dying of that dreadful disease that had inspired her with such horror and commiseration, and to which she would have deemed sudden death by a "ball in the chest or a tile on the head some windy day far preferable!" She, too,

was hastening to that unknown land whither the weary, worn, and vexed spirit of her she had so pitied, and the young, buoyant, and light-hearted sister she had so loved, had preceded her.

Her son Alexander being on the point of going with his tutor to Geneva, where he was to finish his studies, Rachel hastened back to Paris on the night of the 23rd of June. Such was her anxiety to embrace her child that, weak and ill as she was, she would not consent to stop on the way, but came directly through.

Of Rachel's two boys, the eldest, Alexandre, who has been acknowledged by his father, a well-known diplomate, was a very handsome child when quite young. But, as he grew up, this very beauty, derived from his close resemblance to his mother, became less suitable to his sex. The features and figure are so delicate, small, and feminine, that they lack character, and will give an insignificant appearance to the man.

Gabriel, the youngest child, was, when a baby, as plain as his brother was handsome, and for some little while considered an unwelcome addition to the family. Some one asking Rachel what she thought the second son would be:

“His brother's coachman,” was the reply.

This apparently unfeeling remark was probably

made rather because she would not lose the opportunity of saying what she considered a smart thing, than because she thought it, as she afterwards proved herself a kind mother to both her children.

She had allowed the elder child to be the godfather of the younger, and this added link between the boys has given to the affection of Alexandre a character of paternal solicitude that manifests itself in the most charming and graceful manner on every occasion where his little brother seems to require his assistance or protection. He considers himself his brother's guardian. Unfortunately the elder has inherited his mother's delicacy of constitution as well as her features.

Gabriel, who at first was clumsy in shape and whose heavy features promised no beauty, is becoming a very good-looking boy ; years are developing a fine athletic form, handsome limbs and an intelligent countenance.

The children were, on account of the frequent absence of the mother, under the exclusive care and surveillance of their grandmother, until the elder was taken charge of by his father. Both were placed at the best schools, and no expense was spared in their education. But in other respects the greatest economy was observed ; in all that concerned their dress, parsimony was carried to the utmost limits.

Every article, by mending, patching, cleaning, turning and dying was made to last to the farthest verge of respectability. In a letter written to his mother, who was then in America, the elder lad said:

“For all I keep telling grandmamma over and over again that you are to bring home 1,200,000fr. she won't give me a new suit of clothes, and I have to wear the same shabby one.”

It appears that the mother granted the wish, for some little while after, and at the time her cold fastened upon her, she jestingly alluded to the above passage in one of her own letters to the child:

“You see, dear, how imprudent it was in me to go to the expence of 250fr. for your new suit. I have been taken ill, and now good bye to the 1,200,000fr.!”

The elder lad was old enough to understand the dangerous nature of his mother's illness, and manifested the most anxious solicitude to have correct information on the subject of her health.

Fearing the truth might be kept from him by his grandmother and aunts—he was probably aware of their system of negation on that subject—he would write to the faithful Rose, adjuring her to tell him exactly how his dear mamma was.



The love of change that had actuated her throughout her life caused her to choose a new residence in Paris when she returned from Egypt, although her hotel, rue Trudon, and its contents were yet unsold. Her new apartments, No. 9, Place Royal, were much more spacious than those of her own hotel, and she half-jestingly, half-sadly remarked that "there would be plenty of room for those who chose to attend her funeral. Her mournful prevision was not justified by the event, for, with the exception of the palaces and public edifices, no building in Paris would have been spacious enough for the crowd that followed her remains to their last resting-place.

The hotel in the Place Royal had once pertained to the ancient family of Nicolai, and had been inhabited by eminent magistrates and venerable chancellors, one of whom was the President Nicolai, the tutor of Voltaire. This had also been the last residence in Paris of the poet Victor Hugo.

## CHAPTER XIV.

1857.

Concealment of Illness—Bulletins of Health Read on the Stage  
 —Molé—Nicholet's Monkey-Actors—Departure for Cannel  
 —Melancholy Pilgrimage—Cannes—Villa at Cannel—  
 The Dream—Variations in Health and Spirits—Farandoles  
 —Sister Sarah—Raphael and the Cross—Last Autograph—  
 Hebrew Prayer—Death—Funeral—*veute après Dieu*.

THE state of the *tragédienne's* health prohibiting her remaining in Paris during the winter, Cannel was the residence selected by her medical advisers.

A singular circumstance connected with the illness of Rachel was the doubt so long entertained by the public as to its dangerous nature. This proceeded not only from a long experience of her propensity to feign illness, but also from the care with which her relatives concealed the real state of her health. When her indispositions were for her own convenience those around her proclaimed them; when there was real cause for

alarm they were no less anxious to conceal it. Rachel's influence was indispensable to her numerous hangers-on; so long as she lived, there was a *prestige* attached to all belonging to her, and that *prestige* was increased or lessened as the danger of losing her became more or less imminent.

A witty *journaliste*, referring to the position of Rachel in her own family and to the degree of dramatic talent possessed by some of the other members of it, said he was reminded of a *dilettanti habitué* of the Opera, who, during the overture of "Robert le Diable," beat the time very assiduously. His neighbor in the next stall, seeing this philharmonic enthusiasm, and deeming that he might possibly have the honor of touching the elbow of Meyerbeer himself, at last ventured to say :

"You are a musician, sir?"

"Not exactly, but I have a brother who owns a musical snuff box!"

In the Felix family, added the narrator, Mademoiselle Rachel was the owner of the musical snuff box, and its name was *La Tragédie*.

Rachel herself did not scruple to jest on the manner in which she was *exploitée* for the general benefit of her kith and kin, and most willingly permitted of it. Some one remonstrating with

her on the occasion of her American trip, she laughingly replied :

“ Raphael is the wandering Jew, and I am his five sons.”

Madame Felix, accompanied by a young relative, was met on the Boulevards within a day or two of her daughter's death, by a person who enquired how the *tragédienne* was. The young relative was thoughtlessly replying that the last news was very bad and that little hope remained, when the elder lady, hastily interrupting her, said it was quite a mistake ; Rachel was much better !

During the last century, when any favorite of the theatre-going public was ill, it was customary for one of his or her comrades to give the bulletin of the absent one's health to the audience every evening. On such occasions the spectators frequently testified an interest highly flattering to its object. Sometimes, however, these tokens of sympathy were so exaggerated that they excited the ridicule of less passionate admirers. Thus, when Molé the celebrated comedian, was kept from the stage by a severe and protracted illness, the report of his physician, which was read nightly, drew from the audience, and more especially from the feminine portion of it, the most absurd demonstrations of feeling.

That there is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous is most frequently exemplified in France, where criticism is ever on the alert and humour always in search of a subject. Nicolet, the manager of the little house now known as the Théâtre de la Gaîté, parodied the scenes of silly enthusiasm that took place at the Théâtre Français by giving nightly bulletins of the health of one of his best actors, a favorite monkey then ill.

The public of the present day carry to such an extreme the love of fun and the propensity to criticism that it was quite as well, perhaps, that no attempt was made to revive the old custom on the occasion of the *tragédienne's* illness.

The 15th of September was the day fixed for her departure. There are in our lives solemn and decisive moments, when the veil that conceals futurity is drawn aside and our souls are permitted a glance into the arcana of fate. We are filled with vague instincts, with secret aspirations which we cannot account for then, but of which the mystery is solved by subsequent events. At times, for an absence we design shall be but temporary only, we dwell on the farewell as though we were conscious the parting was to be eternal; at others we are tormented by an irresistible

longing to revisit places towards which some superhuman power impels us. Rachel was under the influence of some such occult and inexplicable inspiration during the night that preceded her departure for the South of France. Her sleep was of short duration, and although nothing required she should rise early, tormented by an anxious wish to see once more a spot associated with the most memorable events of her life, she was dressed long before the dawning of the tardy autumnal day. To those who remonstrated on her early rising she peremptorily replied she had a pilgrimage to perform before she left Paris, and that her family could meet, and take leave of her at the station.

From her residence in the Place Royale, which she was never to re-enter alive, she drove, passing by the Gymnase, to the Théâtre Français, and ordering the carriage to stop before it, remained long gazing at the house that had been the scene of her first *debûts* and of fifteen of the most brilliant years of her career. God only knows what her reflections were, as mute and absorbed in thought, she contemplated the doors which she had entered poor, timid and unknown, to leave rich, proud and celebrated. When first she had crossed yon threshold she possessed none of

Fortune's gifts, but she was full of hope, of life ! Now, she was rich in all the world prizes, but her cup of life was nearly empty, and, for her hopes, they were faint indeed !

A friend at last roused her from the meditations in which, regardless of the hour, she was indulging, and hurried her off. She leaned her head out of the window as long as the building remained in sight. When she reached the station she spoke but little, bidding, with a sad smile only, what proved to many of the friends assembled there, a last adieu. She was carried in a chair from the station to the railway carriage, for she was no longer able to walk.

Cannes, a small town of the Département du Ver, is, or rather should be, the Nice of France. If England owned a spot so prodigally endowed with all the advantages Nature can bestow, a beautiful town would long ago have been built on those smiling margins.

Cannes, situated in a recess of one of the most charming bays of the Mediterranean, and sheltered by the surrounding highlands, is a sort of natural conservatory where reigns a perpetual spring, and where the most delicate valetudinarians find, during the severest winters, a sky ever clear and mild, a balmy atmosphere, and the perpetual ema-

nations of flowered-covered fields. Flowers are cultivated in that district as grain and fodder are elsewhere, and fields of violets, of roses, of heliotropes, instead of wheat, oats and clover, supply a large proportion of the perfumery used in both hemispheres. The Isles of St. Margueritte, which it might not be impossible to unite to each other by means of a dyke, close the entrance to the Bay of Cannes, and protect it against storms. The railway of Toulon to Nice, which touches at Cannes, and makes it easy of access, will, in all probability, give to this privileged town the development to which it is in so many respects entitled.

At the present day, however, Cannes of itself offers but few comforts and attractions to strangers. Those who visit it are drawn thither by the pretty villas built in the adjoining valleys, or on the charming heights that surround it, by foreign residents. Lord Brougham has for many years owned a delightful residence here, and the picturesque and splendid chateau of Lord Lowndesborough is worthy of note.

It is only in a villa that anything like comfort can be obtained by an invalid, but it is very difficult to procure one, as the owners have built them for their use, and usually reside in them with



their families. It is seldom that one can be rented.

The retreat that sheltered Rachel's last days was not in Cannes, but in Cannet, a little village in the environs, of very difficult access. The road to it is from Cannes, and so extremely steep and rugged that at one point it is altogether impracticable to carriages and horses. The visitor to the villa of M. Sardou, where Rachel received so generous a hospitality, is obliged to walk, or be carried, through the ravines and valleys which forbid its approach ; and, when he has reached the goal, he finds difficulties of another nature are yet to be surmounted before he can enter it.

The house, spacious, beautifully situated in an orange-grove and well guarded from the wind, is singularly constructed. The main building has no staircase, consequently the door affords an entrance to the ground-floor only. To reach the upper-story one must enter the left-hand turret, ascend the stairs to the second-floor, cross a bridge connecting with another turret, descend one pair of stairs in that turret, and cross another bridge, which finally leads into the upper-stories of the house itself.

The owner of this pretty villa, M. Sardou, formerly of the Grand Opera, placed it at Mademoi-

selle Rachel's disposal, positively refusing any remuneration, while M. Mario Nechard, the author of "*La Fiammina*," by whom it was then inhabited, as courteously gave it up to her. No more favorable situation could possibly have been chosen, and the interior of the house was fitted up in a style that bore witness to the owner's taste for the fine arts.

M. Sardou had been the intimate friend of the sculptor David (of Angiers) and many of that artist's works ornamented the rooms. In the best chamber—a spacious one with high snow-white walls, adorned with friezes and sculptures in the antique style—the bedstead was also white, and seemed carved of stone. At the foot of the bed was a statue of the Grecian Polhymnia, wearing on its marble features an expression of intense sadness; attired in long sweeping robes that had a funeral aspect, she leaned on a pedestal that resembled a tomb-stone. This figure, which gave the beholder the idea of a mourner sorrowing over a grave, made so painful an impression that it was immediately removed.

But as in the life of every great public character there must always be some remarkable prediction or wonderful dream shadowing forth the coming event previous to some great crisis, the

following is said to have occasioned the horror with which the first sight of her dormitory at Cannet filled the mind of the *tragédienne*.

After the performance on the 8th of July, 1852, before an audience of kings and princes, who had admired and complimented her to her heart's content, she had retired to bed in a state of feverish excitement.

That night she had a fearful dream.

A giant's hand, burning like fire, heavy as lead, covered her chest, crushing it despite all her efforts to rid herself of the dreadful weight. She *dreamed* that awaking with the excruciating pain, she found herself in a room that was not the one she had retired to, in a bed that was not the one she had fallen asleep in; the room was spacious, its tall walls were white, and near the bed was a *prie-dieu* of white marble, over which hung a marble figure.

A voice that seemed to belong to the invisible body under whose visible hands she was writhing, uttered several times these words:

"Thou shalt die here under my hand!—thou shalt die here under my hand!"

The aspect of the chamber at the Villa Sardou was certainly sufficient to convey a melancholy

impression to one so ill, and no dream was needed to account for it.

Her health continued for some time to fluctuate capriciously, but during these alternations she daily waxed weaker. One day she would declare herself much better, the next she would be in a state of complete prostration. These physical variations necessarily reacted on the nerves, and her humor varied accordingly.

In the beginning, and while she could still find energy for any kind of employment, she would beguile time doing such work as required no particular attention or nicety, and constantly desired Rose to give her "more towels to hem."

When she felt able she received a few friends, and, when forbidden to speak, listened to their chat, or played at cards, always her favorite pastime.

One day, when she was in the enjoyment of one of those occasional moments of "feeling quite well again," with which treacherous consumption deludes the victims it has irretrievably condemned—gleams of sunshine that render the succeeding gloom more terrible—she manifested a desire to go down into the garden. She was immediately carried there, and the peasants of the neighbor-

hood having assembled, danced for her amusement their provençal dances, called Ferandoles. But poor Rachel was sustained but by a momentary and feverish excitement, her spirits fell as rapidly as they had risen; she could not bear even these innocent amusements long; a spasm came on that put an end to the improvised *fête*, and the actors stole off like the performers in a comic opera-scene, with hushed tread and finger on lip, astonished, frightened, and saddened.

During her sojourn at Cannet, Rachel was attended by M. Maure, former representative in both assemblies of the Republic, and a nephew of the eloquent conventionalist, Isnard. The Medical talent of M. Maure was thought much of in all Provence, but when the danger increased her own physician was sent for from Paris; human skill was, however, powerless, the disease was too deeply rooted.

Her desire to live was intense; the nearer she approached to death the more despairingly she clung to the life that was escaping her. Her docility to her physicians was implicit; she followed to the letter every prescription, obeyed every hint, asking but to live, to live!

Her sufferings were extreme and she must have

often thought of her sister Rebecca's exclamation under similar circumstances :

"Oh, God, must one suffer thus to die ! "

The *tragédienne* endured patiently, sustained by the hope that she would survive all pain, and she had every consolation that friendship could bring, every comfort that wealth could purchase. Her sister Sarah never left her for a moment, and, as we have already said, although the creature of impulse and ungovernable in her fits of passion, whenever there was imminent danger she was extremely kind and attentive. Sarah was the only member of her father's family present when the last sad hour came.

The tie between Rachel and Sarah was closer than that which bound them to the other sisters. Between these two there was less distance of time, they had known poverty and want together, they had grown up in evil days, of which Leah, and more especially Dinah, had little remembrance. There were, perhaps, other and far more serious motives on Rachel's side for the preference shown for Sarah, in whose friendship she had trusted on occasions of difficulty and danger.

Rebecca had at one time been the favorite sister of the *tragédienne*, but when she died there

was too great a disparity of age to permit of either of the other girls taking her place.

Raphael, being the only brother, was naturally a favorite, but Rachel especially was always disposed to treat him with unbounded indulgence. An anecdote, related by herself, proves that in early childhood she exercised no small degree of influence over him.

Little Rachel had seen, among the paltry gew-gaws, gilt chains, pinchbeck rings, necklaces, &c., exposed for sale, in open cases, by a neighbor, a trinket she coveted exceedingly—the article that had so much attracted the notice of the child of Israel was, strange to say, a cross! Without, perhaps, any very definite idea of the difference between *meum* and *tuum*, but actuated by the impulse that has led many better-schooled and higher-born children, she commissioned her little brother to steal this cross. The proprietor of the desecrated symbol, having found out who was the thief, carried his complaint to the parents, who were very indignant. The charge being clearly made out, condign punishment was administered to the culprit. Though very severely beaten, the boy maintained a Spartan silence with regard to his accomplice, never attempting to plead the extenuating circumstances of having operated

for another. As for Rachel, she used to say she never would forget her feelings when she saw her little brother hauled about by the hair and whipped for doing her bidding. Fright, however, left no room for magnanimity, and she did not confess her participation in the sin; but she learned a lesson that was of no small value—she was taught the consequences of stealing, and what another child acquires with years, she did in an hour. She was wont to remark that, when very young, the propensity to steal was strong in her, but that this incident had effectually cured her.

She had a great passion for gambling, and, when surrounded by her family and intimate friends, was always getting up some game, even if it was but the child's play of *loto*. She was not very scrupulous in her play, cheating whenever she got a chance, perfectly delighted when she won a few francs, and quite out of temper if she lost insignificant sums. Yet, after manifesting the utmost vexation and ill humour because she had lost a few francs, if Raphael came in with some plausible reason for wanting a couple of thousand, she would give them without hesitation.

During her last illness her children were with her; the eldest accompanied by his tutor, and the



youngest having been sent from his college of St. Barbe, at her request, to stay with her.

Her mother was not with her when she died, though she had remained with her some time previous to the last moments. Rachel, actuated by the capricious impulse which sometimes led her to do the most unexplainable things, insisted peremptorily, a few days before her death, that Madame Felix should return to Paris and attend to some business for her. She seemed, indeed, to wish all her relatives away, with the exception of Sarah.

Nor were those who had been friends and admirers of the gay and brilliant *tragédienne* forgetful of her when, wasted by disease and saddened by the prospect of approaching dissolution, she could no longer minister to their amusement or gratify their vanity. Prince Napoleon, when at Marseilles, made an excursion to Cannet and visited the poor invalid, who was deeply moved by this proof of his Imperial Highness' kind remembrance. She could no longer sit up, but the wish to appear to advantage still ruled the heart whose beats were numbered. To receive the visit with which she was to be honored she had caused herself to be dressed in an elegant quilted white silk *peignoir*; a profusion of rich lace concealed the

emaciated neck and wrists, and a pretty morning cap shaded the pale cheeks.

Another kind heart, whose sympathy she had less reason to expect, M. Legouvé, the poet, with whom she had had the lawsuit in 1853, hastened from Paris expressly to offer her this last proof of friendship. The breach, *à propos* of "Medée," had recently been made up. A short time before her death Rachel had dictated a charming letter to the poet, in answer to which he had gone to see her. He arrived within four days of the one that proved her last, and when no one could be admitted.

After having clung so despairingly to life, as the term approached she would at times speak of it calmly, though in reality her hopes were never quite extinguished. A week before her death she admitted a stranger of distinction to see her, and seemed gratified with the sympathy he expressed. To the never-failing request for her autograph, she replied :

"Ah, you do well to ask for it now, it will soon be too late!"

She then wrote on a sheet of paper :

"In a week from now I shall begin to be food for worms, and for writers of biographies."

"RACHEL."

The visitor, shocked at so sinister an anticipation, wished to decline the autograph, but she pushed it towards him, saying :

“Take it, take it, it will, perhaps, be the last thing I shall ever write.”

On the 22nd of December, she did write, though with great difficulty, a letter to a very distinguished personage, and dated it January 1st 1858, accounting for her so doing, in these words :

“I post-date this letter \* \* \* \* I feel as though the doing so will make me live till then.”

And she did outlive her date, though but for three days.

From a letter written to M. Sardou, the proprietor of the house in which she died, by a friend who was then present, we borrow the following interesting account of her last moments.

“I had felt the approach of the fatal event on Friday, January 1, when we exchanged the compliments of the New Year ; Rachel embraced us with so much feeling it was evident that in her own mind she anticipated the eternal adieux. Doctor Bergonier had, however, assured me we might yet expect life would be prolonged a few days.

On Saturday nothing particular occurred.

Rachel remained, as usual, plunged in a sort of stupor, the effect of excessive debility, and from which she was now, at intervals, roused by fits of excessive pain, after which she would again fall asleep. Toward midnight she awoke quite calm, as though out of a long sleep, and chatted familiarly with those around her bed. She desired to write to her father, but had not strength to finish. The letter she was dictating contained her last requests, but violent spasms of pain compelled her to cease for the time. She remained in a state of complete prostration, and with infinite trouble was made to swallow a little sustenance from time to time.

At eleven o'clock Sunday morning the expectoration had become so difficult that it was feared she would choke; an unexpected effort having relieved her, calm succeeded to this crisis. Rachel then expressed a wish to finish the letter to her father; she dictated to the end, read it all over, and then exclaimed:

"My poor Rebecca, my dear sister, I am going to see thee! I am indeed happy!"

She then added a few words to the letter, signed it, and appeared to fall asleep. This state lasted several hours.

Sarah had, up to this moment, hesitated to call

in religious assistance; the words uttered by Rachel now decided her, and she despatched a telegraphic message to the Consistory of Nice, which immediately sent ten persons, men and women. They arrived towards eight o'clock, but they were not introduced for some time in the chamber, lest the sight of them should cause Rachel too great a shock. At ten o'clock there was another fit like that of the morning, which alarmed all the house. This the doctors said would be the last; and the members of the Consistory were summoned. Two women and an old man approached the bed and began to sing in Hebrew a psalm, beginning :

“Ascend to God, daughter of Israel.”

Rachel turned her face calmly towards the singers.

“Behold, Lord, the agony of Thy handmaid; pity her sufferings; shorten her pains, my God, and let those she endures redeem her sins!

“In the name of Thy love, God of Israel, deliver her soul she aspires to return to Thee, break the bonds that bind her to dust and suffer her to appear before Thy glory.”

The countenance of Rachel seemed illumined by celestial light; the singers continued :

“The Lord reigneth, the Lord has reigned, the Lord will reign everywhere and for evermore!

“Blessed, everywhere and for ever, be the name of His glorious reign !”

‘The Eternal One is God! (*seven times*).

“Listen, Israel, the Eternal, our God, the Eternal is one.

“Go, then, whither the Lord calleth Thee. Go, and may His mercy assist thee. May the Eternal, our God, be with Thee; may His immortal angels guide thee to heaven, and may the righteous rejoice when the Lord receiveth thee in His bosom!”

“God of our fathers, revive in Thy mercy this soul that goeth to Thee; unite it to those of the holy patriarchs, amid the eternal joys of the heavenly Paradise! Amen.”

Rachel pressed Sarah’s hand, and expired with a smile upon her lips.

And the singers said :

“Blessed be the Judge of Truth!”

All present were moved by the tokens of heavenly grace Rachel had manifested. It cannot be doubted that Rachel died with the hope of another life.

Until now I had doubted this faith of hers, which, perhaps, was not definite and free from doubt until the last solemn moment. However, I must confess that I had already heard her utter words of religious hope on the occasion of a solemn act of her life, which took place on the 15th of last December.

But, though she was, to all outward appearance dead, life was not in reality extinct for some time after the fatal news had been telegraphed to her relatives in Paris. The syncope that preceded

death bore so much resemblance to it that even the physicians were deceived by it. The one who was to embalm the body fancied he discerned a slight beating of the artery of the neck. A mirror held to the lips showed no sign of breath, but there was an almost imperceptible motion of the heart, which did not cease for some hours.

Rachel had died without a sigh. Of all her relatives Sarah, who had not left her since her departure from Paris, was the only one present at the last scene. Rose, the faithful maid, who had attended her for twenty years, and decked her for many a triumph, smoothed the pillow under the death-pale cheek. The doctor, the Rabbi of Nice, and ten members of the Consistory were the other persons present. So calm and beautiful were the features after death that a photograph was taken of them.

The body was embalmed and taken to Paris for interment. When the bier passed through Marseilles the Rabbi and Consistory of that city came to the station and said prayers over the body, after which the coffin was raised by the members and carried to the railway carriage.

Though every token of respect was paid thus publicly to the remains of this celebrated woman, though they were brought to Paris, with all the

care, the pomp of woe, that money could procure, a delay, occasioned, as already related, by the fact that death did not really take place at the time it was supposed, gave rise to the most absurd reports. The story ran that to avoid expense the body had been put into a common deal packing-case, and sent to the railway to be forwarded to Paris as merchandise, that in accordance with this denomination it had been stowed away in the luggage van, but on the arrival of the train at the Lyons station, to the amazement of all, the case was missing! Who could have had any inducement to commit so sacrilegious a theft? None but a lover, of course, consequently it must have been M——. He had been her first love. After a rupture that had lasted years, during which each had sought consolation elsewhere, the breach had been healed, the friendly intercourse resumed, the tie cemented anew. Rachel had no sooner undertaken the transatlantic excursion that had proved so fatal than she longed to return to Europe. To the addresses of new admirers she replied by shewing the portrait of M——. On her arrival in France, she had, with her sister Sarah, been on a visit at his country residence, and when her health sent her to Egypt, she had been followed thither by her



faithful friend. M—— was largely interested in the Lyons railway, and could easily possess himself of the case that contained all that remained of her he had loved. The object of the theft was to inter the precious remains in his own grounds, and erect there a monument over which he might mourn unseen by profane eyes.

The arrival of Sarah, accompanying the remains, at last silenced the indefatigable newsmongers, and the funeral obsequies were performed according to the Jewish rites, in the Israelite division of the cemetery of Père La Chaise. The hearse was preceded by the Grand Rabbi of the Jewish Consistory of Paris, and followed by the father, brother, and youngest boy, as chief mourners. The ribbons were held by MM. Alex. Dumas (the elder) Auguste Maquet, Chairman of the Society of Dramatic Authors, M. Geffroy, *sociétaire* of the Théâtre Français, and Baron Taylor.

Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather the crowd was immense. Perhaps no dramatic artist was ever followed to the grave by so numerous a *cortège* of distinguished writers. Among these illustrious were MM. Scribe, Alphonse de Vigny, St. Beuve, Emilie Augier, Legouvé, Viennet, and other members of the

Academy ; MM. Camille Doucet from the Ministère d'Etat ; M. Emile de Girardin ; MM. Halevy, Alex. Dumas, Auguste Barbier, Fiorentino, Mario Nehaud, Arsène Houseaye, Louis de Ratisbonne, Latour de St. Ybars, Michel Levy, and the managers of the Parisian theatres. The majority of the *artistes* of the Grand Opera, Théâtre Français, Opera Comique, &c., &c., were also there.

Funeral orations were spoken by MM. Jules Janin, Auguste Maquet, and Bataille.

The public testimony the Rabbi's words afforded that the *tragédienne* had died in the faith of the people was probably introduced in his discourse on account of the reports circulated that in her heart at least, she was a Catholic, in corroboration of which it was asserted that during her last illness she had constantly worn on her bosom an image of the Virgin, and that so long as she had strength to read anything, her favorite book had been the "Imitation." How far this was true it is difficult to say, as Sarah was too staunch a Jewess not to conceal from every eye any such manifestations of apostacy if they had existed. Rachel herself, even, at the last hour, gave no positive indication of a preference for any particular creed, not even of the one she

was born in, and of which she had never been a strict observer.

But while so many men, ranking high in the different branches of literature and art, had hastened to testify, by their presence, the loss sustained by the classic drama, the absence of one whose place no other could fill was noticed with surprise. M. Sanson, the professor whose lessons during so many years had so largely contributed to the success of Mademoiselle Rachel, and who was expected, as the representative of the Comédie Française, to have pronounced her funeral oration, was not even present at the burial. The reason soon became public. On the previous Saturday, M. Empis, the manager of the Comédie Française, had received a letter from M. Felix, sen., the purport of which was that he hoped some one would speak, in the name of the company, at the interment of his daughter, appointed to take place on the following Monday, but at the same time peremptorily rejecting M. Sanson as the orator.

The letter having been communicated to the *sociétaires*, this expression of hostility towards a comrade who was loved and esteemed by all, was, very properly resented, and it was resolved that no one should take the place of him whom merit

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and priority of standing in the company entitled to represent it.

Thus it was fated that dissensions and petty quarrels should accompany her career even beyond the grave.

## APPENDIX.

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It might have been supposed that the curtain had dropped over the closing scene, and that the last French *tragédienne* had been left to rest in the tomb hallowed by the memory of genius. Not so. Scarcely three months had elapsed since she was laid in her grave when her name, placarded all over Paris, once more called the public, when the curtain was once more raised. This time the after-piece acted was sadder than any tragedy in which she had, living, borne a part ; it was entitled “Vente Après Décès de Mademoiselle Rachel.” The only articles it had been thought necessary to specify in these notices were the *china* and *fine wines*.

The *tragédienne* had been, throughout her career, the stay and chief support of her father's family. She had been *exploitée* for their benefit as much as for her own, to the last grasp, and now that she was dead it occurred to the children of Israel that something more might be made out of her remains. The spoils were to be divided, and, as it is not the custom in these degenerate days to cast lots for the raiment of the dead, hers was put up at auction.

Great ingenuity was exerted in order to make the

most of the prestige attached to everything that had belonged to Rachel. Every article was classed and a number of catalogues were distributed all over the country. The sale was pompously announced, and private and public exhibition-days appointed with all the ceremonial of *sergents de ville* to guard the treasures and *cicerones* to explain them.

The show was a sad one. The things that had become identified with the mistress whom they had contributed to adorn and beautify, that with her had had their home sacred and inviolate, were now but so many goods and chattels, inventoried, catalogued, numbered, ready to come under the hammer, thence to be scattered abroad in every direction.

In one room, on tables, were displayed the ornaments and properties pertaining to each character; the damaskeened corslet, the casque and gauntlets of *Joan of Arc*; the gem-hilted poinard of *Roxane*; the Egyptian diadem of *Cleopâtre*; and the cameos of *Phèdre*; the tiaras and sceptres of the royal dames the *tragédienne* had evoked from their lethargic sleep, and that now had died with her who had personified them so well. Against the walls were arranged the theatrical costumes. On a near inspection it was evident that the dresses were made of the most costly materials; but, as they hung there, lank, limp and shapeless, empty of the lithe form that had given such classic grace to their folds, such queenly dignity to their sweeping trains, the rich vestures gave the place the appearance of a costumier's show-room.

Had they voices what disclosures those embroidered

bodices, those jewelled crowns might make of the passionate workings of the heart they had covered, the brain they had encircled ! Little, however, did the careless crowd trouble itself with such conjectures as it passed along, commenting on all it saw and on all it had heard, on the probable value of the gew-gaws and on the errors of her who had worn them.

In another room were arranged the plate and real jewels, the latter in show cases much after the manner in which those of some crowned heads were seen at the two great Exhibitions in London and Paris, and really almost as worthy admiration. The imperial and royal gifts, each recording some triumph of which it had been the brilliant reward, were placed conspicuously.

The library, though not extensive, was valuable, inasmuch as many of the books, having been presented by the authors, Hugo, Lamartine, Ponsard, Emile Augier and others of the most admired modern poets, contained their autographs, and, in some cases, complimentary verses addressed to the *tragédienne*. Among the works of the theatrical *repertory* were tragedies with alterations, additions and remarks in the handwriting of Talma, to whom they had belonged ; others had been similarly annotated by the late owner.

Among the smaller articles of *ménage* was a cup of Sevres porcelain, which was doubly valuable from having also pertained to two theatrical celebrities, its first owner was Mademoiselle Clairon. The paintings and richest portion of the furniture had been disposed of at the sale of the effects in the Hotel Trudon, some time before Mademoiselle Rachel's death.

So far there was nothing very objectionable in the exhibition. It was probably necessary that the plate, jewels and other articles should be sold in order to make a division of the property in accordance with the will of the deceased. But it really seemed unnecessary as well as grossly indelicate to make a public exhibition and sale of the personal linen of the *tragédienne*; if the family could not make some arrangement among themselves with regard to such articles, they might at least have been more privately disposed of. The whole stock—and it was a larger one than many ready-made linen warehouses contain—together with the dresses, shawls and laces, was set down in a separate catalogue, and displayed in the bed-chamber. The petticoats of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* and the hose of *Marie Stuart* were to be knocked down to the highest bidder, as well as the peplum of *Camille* and mantle of *Phèdre*.

Here, too, was to be seen the only creature whose countenance indicated a consciousness of the desecration going on. By the bed, on which was spread a small fortune in laces, sat a woman past the middle age, whose thin figure was clothed in mourning, and around whose wrinkled features the border of a black cap, unrelieved by a bit of white, was just visible. This was Rose, in whose care for twenty years the wardrobe of Mademoiselle Rachel had always remained—she still sat there, faithful to her trust to the last, the poor old waiting-maid who had seen the commencement and the close of the *tragédienne's* career, who had decked her so often with that finery, and who,



with the same trembling hands, had attired her in her last dress.

What her feelings were needed no telling. In the deep lines around the compressed lips, grief and anger were mingled, and the look in the dark eyes that glared at each stranger who approached to examine the laces on the bed, was one of hatred and defiance. Though the figure was motionless, though the head never turned, the look followed you, you could not get rid of it, it reached whatever good feeling lay underneath the thick coating of selfishness with which experience of the world had covered your heart, you felt thoroughly ashamed of the idle curiosity that had brought you there to overhaul those sad relics, and, unheeding the admonition of the Cerberus in the shape of a *sergeant de ville*, bawling out at short intervals :

"Passez, Messieurs ; passez, Mesdames," you hastened to make your escape.

The same eye to effect that had presided over the arrangement of the different articles had organised the sales. In lieu of the crowd of sordidly-clothed, dirty-faced, hook-nosed, long-bearded, cunning-eyed dealers in second-hand goods, hustling, jostling, elbowing, and crushing the toes of any luckless wight whose decent appearance proclaimed him not one of them, the respectable-looking bidders who filled the rows of velvet-covered benches, looked as though they had met there to hear morning concerts. The auctioneer himself spoke in subdued tones as though he were murmuring prayers to which the attentive audience gave the responses.

The buyers were, as we have already said, of the better classes at these sales, with the exception, however, of the two days on which the costumes were sold, when numerous costumiers and *marchandes à la toilette* came in search of bargains. Thus many a gay masquerader will unconsciously polk and quadrille and waltz in a fancy garb made of the robes in which *Camille* has uttered her fierce anathemas, or *Phèdre* lamented her fatal love.

Among other attempts made to give additional interest to some of the articles sold, the old story of the guitar was revived by some of the papers in behalf of an instrument of the kind that was coming under the hammer. But this was beyond even the boldness of an auctioneer. When it came to be the turn of the guitar, he said that it "had been erroneously announced that this was the instrument with which Mademoiselle Rachel when a child had sung in the *cafés*. Still this guitar was valuable inasmuch as it had been ten years in the *tragédienne's* possession, and was occasionally used by her *en souvenir* of her first calling." How little the bidders credited even this more modest statement, was evident in the price the guitar brought—10fr.—as it was quite new and clean it was much less than its market value.

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